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# Threads of everyday violence: Childhood in an Urdu-speaking Bihari camp in Bangladesh

Jiniya Afroze

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Childhood Studies

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies

The Open University

May 2019

## Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my original work and any references are duly acknowledged.

The publication that came out of this work:

Afroze, J. (2019) 'Realising childhood in an Urdu-speaking Bihari community in Bangladesh', in von Benzon, N. and Wilkinson, C. (eds) *Intersectionality and Difference in Childhood and Youth: Global Perspectives*. London: Routledge, pp. 158-172.

## Abstract

This thesis explores children's everyday experiences in an Urdu-speaking Bihari camp in Dhaka, Bangladesh. As members of the Bihari community, children and adults living in the camp are historically, ethnically, linguistically, and structurally marginalised. Examining the everyday lives of children and adults in a camp, this research illustrates how the concept of everyday violence plays out in children's lives, and how children negotiate their agency in responding to everyday violence. Studies of children's experiences of everyday violence and their agency in responding to it are still nascent in the field of Childhood Studies. Taking on board some of the contemporary discussions from the field relating to relational agency (Spyrou, 2018, 2019; Spyrou, Rosen and Cook, 2018; Abebe, 2019; Prout, 2019) and everyday violence (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004b; Wells *et al.*, 2014; Maternowska *et al.*, 2018; Pells *et al.*, 2018), this thesis aims to contribute to this emerging body of literature by bringing out a nuanced understanding of children's experiences of everyday violence and their negotiation of agency in relation to power in spaces, gender, and generation. Embracing an ethnographic approach, data was collected between April and November 2016, using a combination of participant observation, interviews, and discussions with 78 children and 54 adults in a Bihari camp. The thesis argues that central to discourses around the construction of childhood in the camp are ideas about the 'good' and 'rotten' child, which are closely linked to the concept of good/rotten spaces. Children's use of spaces, aspirations for education and work, and responses to cultural norms/practices, therefore, intertwine with ideas about respectability which define, shape, and influence children's experiences of everyday violence. While children's opportunities are often compromised and constrained in relation to everyday power dynamics, children constantly contest and negotiate relationships of power. Overall, the subtlety and complexity of children's experiences demand a more nuanced exploration of children's social spaces (e.g. home, camp, streets, school, workplace), as well as the socio-structural factors (e.g. poverty, power relations/dynamics in gender and generation) which shape their lives in order to fully understand how experiences of everyday violence are threaded through the mundane social practices and minutiae of children's everyday lives.



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## Preface

I still remember my first visit to the ‘field’ as an enthusiastic development practitioner with an international children’s charity in Bangladesh in January 2008. The purpose of that field trip was to visit one of the child protection programmes that the charity supported for children and their mothers in one of the largest brothels in Asia. My aim was to gather enough information so that I could produce a few case studies (and success stories) which I could report back to the donors. From a quick walk around the brothel, I could get a glimpse of the life that the women and children were leading. I met children roaming around the narrow streets as their mothers attended to their clients in the only rooms that they had. I met young women with dazzling make-up standing in the lanes to entice the clients. I saw older women with desolate expressions waiting, patiently, to be ‘invited’ by someone. During that visit, I interviewed a few women and children and learned from them their experiences of abuse and exploitation, oppression and discrimination, as well as their aspirations and dreams, courage and confidence. That was the start of my journey as a development worker, although my motivation to work with children began even earlier.

As a young woman from a traditional Bangladeshi family, I probably had a very ordinary aspiration to become a teacher one day. With that in mind, I did my undergraduate and my first masters in English Literature at the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh. As I was studying for my undergraduate degree, I started contributing to a national daily newspaper, and later took a full-time position in a sub-editorial role in the features section. As a journalist, I was given immense opportunities to interact with countless children and women and to feature their stories of struggles, survivals, and successes. Their accounts of surviving acid attacks, sexual harassment, and domestic violence, as well as their narratives of challenging gendered stereotypes gave me new perspectives. Besides, my readings of post-colonial, post-structuralist and feminist theories and literature at university gradually gave me the confidence to question and challenge some taken-for-granted norms and practices that exist in my own society. Even though I briefly did some teaching, I was convinced soon enough that I would not like to see myself in the classroom; instead, I would prefer to work in the community. I



have always had the silent support of my mother but my father was never convinced about my choice of journalism as a career. He was neither quite confident about the security of a woman in journalism nor entirely optimistic about the career prospects of journalism in the context of Bangladesh. While I have always had some reservations about this outlook of my father, in time, I realised I am not a rebel who can take a decision that would upset her parent(s). The transition from journalism to international development, therefore, was a compromised decision for me. It was a way to find a middle ground in negotiating my agency with my parent(s) about my career path. It was inspiring to see though how my father was remarkably receptive about my decision to work in a children's charity which then opened up the possibilities for us to have many conversations about policy and practices, both in national and global contexts.

With the transition from journalism to NGO, I was naïve and confused at the outset. Initially, I fiddled around unlearning the journalistic discourses and getting used to the discourses of international development. I was ambivalent about the disparities between the children's realities on the ground and the development progresses that the charity has promised to its donors. I was uncertain about the best ways to illustrate children's narratives so that it did not bring any 'surprises' to the donors. My interest, perhaps, was in hearing positive stories of their lives – stories of positive changes that were made possible with the support of the charity. I had neither the scope, nor the confidence, to dig deeper into other realities to explore the wider socio-cultural contexts that cause challenges and crises in their everyday lives. Later, while doing my second masters in international development, I was introduced to the contested concept of development and the critique of development theories and development practices in the majority world context<sup>1</sup> (see, for example, Escobar, 1995; Connell, 2007). The use of post-development and post-structural frameworks to understand international children's rights interventions were useful to appreciate that the realities of children's lives in the majority and the minority world contexts are diverse, and their opportunities and prospects within their socio-structural milieus are not the same. This helped me to see how vulnerabilities are often romanticised and commodified within development

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<sup>1</sup> The binary distinction of the north and the south, the developed and the developing, the west and the east – to refer to the resource driven and resource poor population – is problematic. The resources in the world are not equally distributed, and as Aitken *et al.* (2008, p. 5) said, 'when the complexities of the local are looked at closely it is difficult to find a global south'. Thus, here, and throughout the thesis, I draw references to contexts which require development interventions as the majority world (see Punch, 2003; Punch and Tisdall, 2012; Ansell, 2017), knowing that the majority of the world's population belong to those contexts as opposed to the minority world, which arguably has long been considered as the idealised normative world.

interventions. I learned the importance of understanding the relationships of power as well as politics and tensions of international development programmes. Gradually, over the years, I have matured both professionally and personally, which made me more inquisitive, less inclined to see the world in binary terms, and curious about how children experience and respond to their everyday challenges within the broader socio-cultural context.

The stories of the struggles and successes of children that I came across in my role as a practitioner have always stimulated and inspired me. Their strength and courage, in the face of considerable adversities, persistently impress me. Yet, when I began my doctorate, I was aware that I came with the professional baggage of a child protection practitioner, trying to protect or even 'save' these children. This realisation, along with the literature survey, showed me the gaps in my knowledge about children's everyday experiences in Bangladesh. Over the course of my ethnographic fieldwork, however, my specific research questions have evolved, although the broader issue of how children experience their everyday lives in an Urdu-speaking Bihari camp in Bangladesh still has been the same. The research questions that guide this study are:

1. What are the experiences and understandings of everyday life among children and their parents in the socio-spatial context of Urdu-speaking Bihari camp in Bangladesh?
2. How does the idea of everyday violence play out in their lives?
3. How do children construct, negotiate, and exercise their agency in response to everyday violence?

The title of the thesis shows that this research explores children's experiences of everyday violence in an Urdu-speaking Bihari camp in Bangladesh. However, it was not in my original plan to work in this specific community, neither did I intend to explore 'everyday violence' specifically. The rationale for choosing a Bihari camp as a research site was entirely a pragmatic one. Prior to my fieldwork, when I approached a few organisations who work in urban slum contexts in Bangladesh, I got a positive response from *Oikotan*<sup>2</sup>, an organisation that works on the protection of children in *Bithika* camp in Dhaka. As a Bangladeshi and a Bangla speaker I was, at the outset, ambivalent about my choice of the Urdu-speaking Bihari camp as my research site

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<sup>2</sup> To protect anonymity of my research participants, here, and throughout the thesis, I use a pseudonym for my research site, the gatekeeper NGO, and all the research participants.

because of the apparent political, ethnic, and linguistic differences that I have with the people in the camp. Bearing in mind that I represent the dominant majority Bangali, I was ambiguous how the Bihari children and adults would identify with my social position, with its apparent trappings of power. I was aware the Urdu-speaking Bihari community has a distinctive and complex historical, political, and cultural background, and that this is infused with their perceived anti-nationalist sentiments during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971. However, prior to my fieldwork, discussing the community with *Oikotan* and my initial reading about Bihari communities in Bangladesh stirred my interest and gave me the confidence to consider the camp as the research site for my Ph.D. study.

I embraced the concept of everyday violence at a much later stage, only after I finished my fieldwork. The work of Bourgois (2009, p. 17) resonated strongly with me and I found that, while I had not aimed to essentially look for violence in the lives of the research participants, during the course of my fieldwork ‘violence imposed on me because it is central to the organisation of power in everyday life and has been throughout history’. I extract some notes from my field diary that illustrate how my research participants helped me to start thinking about everyday violence in this study.

It was another very hot and humid day today. I was talking to 20-year-old Shiuly sitting on the floor of their one-room-house. With a needle and threads, Shiuly was following the detailed drawings of the flowers in a green saree<sup>3</sup> that she set in a large wooden frame. Shiuly was stitching *karchupi*<sup>4</sup> designs in a saree that would bring her 200 taka (£2), only if she could work day and night for the following three days. But it is not that she gets work order every now and then – as Shiuly said, there is a surplus of labour in the camp, in comparison to the reduced demand for hand-embroidered products in the recent years. As we were chatting about several random things, Shiuly told me at one point that, ‘you know, *Apa*<sup>5</sup>, violence has been threaded through in our lives (*julum amader jibone gantha*). Violence (*Julum*) is part of our everyday lives.

Extracts from field notes, 27 July 2016<sup>6</sup>

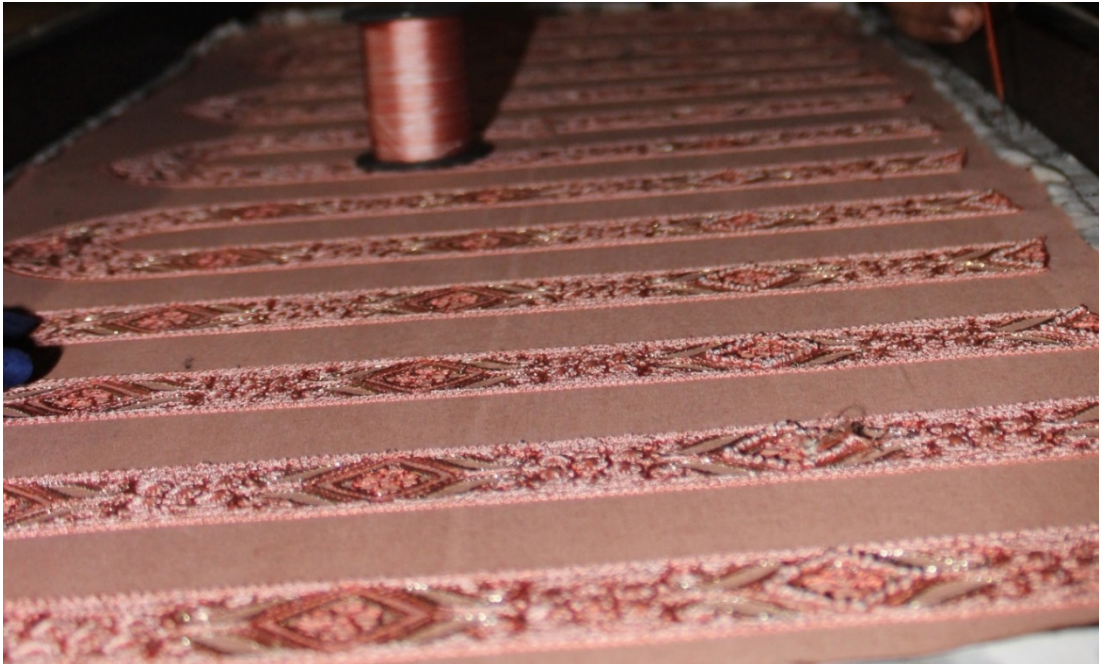
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<sup>3</sup> *Saree* is a long piece of cloth which is traditional attires for many women in South Asia.

<sup>4</sup> *Karchupi* is a traditional hand-embroidery design. This skill has been transferred across generations among people in India and Bangladesh, and is one for which the Biharis are particularly skilled and well known for.

<sup>5</sup> *Apa* is a kinship term in Bangla to address someone who is like an older sister

<sup>6</sup> From hereafter the age of participants refers to their age at the time I conducted the fieldwork



*Figure 0.1 Karchupi design*

I initially did not notice the association Shiuly made between the embeddedness of violence in their everyday lives with the embroidery of *karchupi* designs that are threaded through fabrics. It was only when reading the transcripts of the audio recorded data and my field notes, and my later readings of literature that violence became more prominent as a theme and helped set up this thesis within the theoretical framework of the studies of everyday violence, which I present in Chapter One of this thesis.

Initially, I was interested to use theories of resilience to explore children's experiences with the aim to know how, even while living in challenging situations, children overcome their vulnerabilities. However, as my research progressed, I gathered that the research participants were not necessarily telling me their stories of resilience. I do not deny that the children in my research context are resilient in some contexts, but, in common with the work of Bourgois (2001, p. 29), I too realised that violence is not something outside of my research participants and that they do not simply 'survive' violence. I found that violence is so embedded in their everyday lives that even when they 'get over' any violence they cannot actually 'escape' the 'terror and oppression' that violence imposes on them (Bourgois, 2001, p. 30). The accounts of my research participants encouraged me instead to explore more about their everyday experiences and to know how everyday violence plays out in their lives, and how children negotiate, construct,

and exercise their agency in response to the sometimes overt, and sometimes hidden, violence.

In this thesis, therefore, I consider contemporary arguments in the field of Childhood Studies relating to children's agency and their relationships within hierarchical power structures. Embracing a relational framework, I critically reflect on the historical, socio-cultural and spatial factors that influence and shape the way children understand and experience their everyday lives. While doing this, I consider the notion of everyday violence at the centre of my analysis that brings out the complex ways children exercise and negotiate their agency within the context of precariousness.

By bringing out a more critical and nuanced understanding of everyday lives of the children in an urban slum context in Bangladesh, I, therefore, aim to contribute to the growing literature on relational understanding of childhood and children's agency, and everyday violence (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004b; Wells *et al.*, 2014; Esser *et al.*, 2016b; Maternowska *et al.*, 2018; Pells *et al.*, 2018; Spyrou, 2018, 2019; Spyrou, Rosen and Cook, 2018; Abebe, 2019; Prout, 2019). With a critical and reflexive analysis of children's experiences of everyday violence, the aim is to make a meaningful contribution to the knowledge of childhood and children's everyday lives in the majority world context, specifically through a focus on an under researched minority within Bangladesh.

In Chapter One of this thesis therefore, I present the theoretical and conceptual underpinning of the study. In Chapter Two, I introduce the research context and provide a historical background of the Bihari camp. In Chapter Three, while shedding light on my own reflexive positioning, I discuss the ethics and the methods of this research. Chapter Four, Five, and Six present the findings and analyses of the data. Chapter Four explores children's experiences of everyday violence in relation to the socio-spatial dynamics of the research context. Chapter Five presents children's experiences of everyday violence in relation to their education and work. Chapter Six illustrates children's experiences of everyday violence in relation to gendered and generational inequalities and power. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I review the research questions to see how this study responded to the questions.

# 1 Chapter One: Understanding childhood and everyday violence

## 1.1 Introduction

This study explores the experiences and understandings of everyday lives of children and adults in an Urdu-speaking Bihari camp in Bangladesh through a focus of everyday violence. I start by exploring theories of everyday violence before I discuss how they link with ongoing arguments and discussions in the field of Childhood Studies concerning agency and generational and gendered power. I end with a discussion of how concepts of everyday violence and children's agency play out in the context of Bangladesh, and also within urban slums where I worked.

## 1.2 Conceptualising everyday violence

Violence has often been understood as a visible physical force – either as actual action or threat – with the intention to hurt others either purposefully or by accident which may affect victims' health and wellbeing (Krug *et al.*, 2002; Pinhero, 2006; Maternowska, Potts and Fry, 2016; Lansford and Banati, 2018). The World Health Organization understands violence primarily in terms of its physicality, defining it as:

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. (quoted in Krug *et al.*, 2002, p. 5)

This definition of violence however has been criticised as somewhat limited and lacking in nuance because it downplays notions of power and inequality. In the introduction to the seminal edited volume on *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004a, p.1) state that:

Violence can never be understood solely in terms of its physicality – force, assault, or the infliction of pain – alone. Violence also includes assaults on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victim. The social and cultural dimensions of violence are what gives violence its power and meaning.

Violence disdains easy conceptualisations; as Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004a, p. 2) rightly note, violence can be ‘everything and nothing; legitimate or illegitimate; visible or invisible; necessary or useless; senseless and gratuitous or utterly rational and strategic’. To them, putting too much attention to the physicality of the violence can turn a project into a ‘clinical, literary, or artistic exercise’, which, to their apprehension, can generate a ‘pornography of violence’ by offering a ‘voyeuristic’ illustration of sufferings and torture, camouflaging the broader scenario that influences and affects violence (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004a, p. 2).

As opposed to physical violence, which is primarily directed from one individual to the other, Galtung (1969) in his classic essay ‘Violence, peace, and peace research’ conceptualised violence in relation to structural inequalities, and unequal relationships of power, engrained by the ‘social injustice’ that shapes violence within local realities. In contrast to personal violence, Galtung (1969, p. 173) explains ‘structural violence as something that shows a certain stability, whereas personal violence [...] shows tremendous fluctuations over time’. He continues

Structural violence is silent, it does not show – it is essentially static, it *is* the tranquil waters. In a *static* society, personal violence will be registered, whereas structural violence may be seen as about as natural as the air around us. [Italic original]

Galtung (1969) acknowledges that even though personal violence always remains clearer and more noticeable because of its prominence, structural violence within ‘tranquil waters’ can have a deeper impact on people. Galtung (1969, p. 168) rejects the ‘narrow concept of violence’ where violence is considered from an individualistic point of view. Instead, he argues for the importance of understanding the relationships of power in order to understand violence within a broader and structurally informed orientation:

There may not be any person who directly harms another person in the structure. The violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances (Galtung, 1969, p. 171).

Thus, the unequal distribution of resources affects hierarchies and relationships of power so that someone with less economic resources, combined with a limited education and poor health, will, inevitably, find themselves with the least amount of power and influence in a community.

In his later work, Galtung added another manifestation of violence – cultural violence – to his broader definition of violence:

By 'cultural violence' we mean those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science [...] that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence. (Galtung, 1990, p. 291)

He argues that, in the name of cultural practices, cultural violence reproduces and validates the use of direct and structural violence in the society, making reality so 'opaque' that people are unable to perceive, question, or challenge those acts of violence as something wrong. Building on Galtung's work, Farmer (2003, 2004) reiterates the importance of exploring the social processes and arrangements, engrained in historical, economic, and political practices, which produce and reproduce inequalities and harms such as poverty, exclusion, and injustice. Farmer (2003) coins the term 'pathologies of power' to describe how structural factors result in oppression and inequalities which paralyse and pathologise the oppressed to such an extent that they tend to believe that they are responsible for their own oppression.

To elaborate further the views of understanding violence as structurally contingent and deeply embedded, I find it useful to refer to Bourdieu (1991) who uses the term 'symbolic power' to imply the ways that unequal power relationships and domination are routinely exercised in everyday life. The relationships between those who exercise power and those who accept it, according to Bourdieu, are triggered by 'symbolic power' – whereby the 'dominants' do not recognise their exercise of power as violence, while, the 'dominated' legitimise their own vulnerability by adhering to the values and beliefs of the dominants, as well as internalising the belief that such domination is simply the way of the world (Bourdieu, 1991). Symbolic violence, therefore, is as real as any other forms of violence, where power is channelled in such an 'invisible' way that often it is 'misrecognized' as violence and thus 'recognized' as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 24). Echoing Bourdieu (1992), Bourgois explains that:



For example, an insult per se is not symbolic violence. Symbolic violence occurs through the process of misrecognition. The socially dominated come to believe that the insults directed against them, as well as the hierarchies of status and legitimation that curtail their life chances, are accurate representations of who they are, what they deserve, and how the world has to be (Bourgois, 2009, p. 19).

Drawing on the reasons people ‘misrecognize’ violence, Bourdieu (1991) argues that, as social agents, they operate with presupposed assumptions where they take the world for granted and accept the structures of the world as they are. Bourdieu, however, recognises that his conceptualisation of symbolic violence as ‘the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity’ can be problematic – because of the issue of power – whether power comes from below or whether individuals desire the condition that is enforced upon them (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2004, p. 272). Bourdieu goes on to explain that an individual’s complicity is ‘neither a passive submission to an external constraint nor a free adherence to values’: instead, symbolic violence defies a binary opposition of constraint and freedom (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2004, p. 274). Social hierarchies and inequalities therefore, according to Bourdieu, are not reinforced by external power rather they are legitimised by normalising domination in everyday routine practices.

### 1.2.1 Everyday violence in everyday lives

Individual, structural, and/or symbolic violence are closely intertwined, as the work of all the above theorists has suggested. How these theories play out in ‘real life’ however has been the focus of scholarships by Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, whose work I will explore in this section (Scheper-Hughes, 1996, 1997, Bourgois, 2001, 2009; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004b). Having done that, I will go on to explore some key empirical research on children’s experiences of everyday violence, particularly in the intersection of relationships of power across gender, generation, and space – some key ideas which resonate through my data chapters (Chapters Four to Six).

Drawing on Bourdieu’s ideas of symbolic violence, Scheper-Hughes refers to the routinised normalisation of invisible violence as ‘everyday violence’ (Scheper-Hughes, 1992; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004a), which Bourgois later glossed as a ‘continuum of violence’ (Bourgois, 2001) and ‘normalized violence’ (Bourgois, 2009). Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois wrote:

By including the normative everyday forms of violence hidden in the minutiae of 'normal' social practices – in the architecture of homes, in gender relations, in communal work, in the exchange of gifts, and so forth – Bourdieu forces us to reconsider the broader meanings and status of violence, especially the links between the violence of everyday life and explicit political terror and state repression (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004a, p. 20).

In contrast to communal and political violence, everyday violence is not something extraordinary or 'painfully graphic and transparent' (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004a, p. 2). Instead it is something that is 'taken for granted', 'routinized' (Scheper-Hughes, 2004, p. 177) and 'utterly banal' (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004b, p. 19). Thus, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois have concerns that often this violence can be 'invisible or misrecognized' yet may have significant impacts on people's lives. Scheper-Hughes (1996, p. 889) in her earlier work coined this as 'small wars and invisible genocide', as she finds everyday violence as invisible – not so much because it is 'secreted away or hidden from the view', rather because it is so taken for granted that it is often not counted as violence. Following this line of argument, Scheper-Hughes (1997, p. 473) frames the mundane and routinised violence as 'peace-time crimes', allowing her to capture the fluidity of violence from extraordinary to ordinary, from noteworthy to normal, and from startling to something straightforward.

Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004a) develop Bourdieu's work further, arguing that while it is important to recognise different forms of violence; placing violence into narrow boxes does not allow a full understanding of how structural inequalities and relationships of power are embedded in our everyday lives. They describe everyday violence as a 'slippery concept' and a 'continuum' as it moves from more physical and direct violence to subtler forms of everyday violence that contribute to daily sufferings in mundane lives. Furthermore, violence also gives birth to violence, so that victim and perpetrator cannot be seen as binary opposites: often those who experienced violence can become violent to others in a different time and context. Violence thus becomes omnipresent and generative in 'normative social spaces' (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004a, p. 19), 'operating along a continuum from direct physical assault to symbolic violence and routinised everyday violence, including the chronic, historically embedded structural violence whose visibility is obscured by globalized hegemonies' (Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes, 2004, p. 318). It is therefore not surprising that Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes (2004, p. 318) call for more ethnographically based empirical studies to understand 'the way everyday life is shaped by the historical

processes and contemporary politics of global political economy as well as by local discourse and culture’.

Following the conceptualisation of violence as banal and routinised, I found ‘everyday violence’ a useful lens in my research to discern the violence that ‘we do not expect’ or ‘we do not want’ in our routine lives (Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes, 2004, p. 318). Research studies that focus on everyday violence in relation to children’s experiences, my primary focus in this project are however, relatively rare. However, there is some amount of literature that sheds light on the complexities of children’s experiences of violence in the majority world context, for example see Wells *et al.* 2014.

The Young Lives<sup>7</sup> project (Pells and Morrow, 2018; Pells *et al.*, 2018; Young Lives, 2019) has focused on children’s experiences of violence in India, Ethiopia, Peru, and Vietnam and brings out some grounded realities of children’s experiences of violence in these contexts. Their research sheds light onto children’s experience of violence which are ‘pervasive, often routinised and normalised’ (Pells *et al.*, 2018, p. 33). The researchers on this project emphasise the importance of understanding children’s experiences of violence in connection to children’s social context, poverty, ethnicity, caste, and cultural norms. Elsewhere, Pells and Morrow (2018) illustrate the interconnectedness of different kinds of violence – both in terms of various forms of violence as much as across various settings. Their research shows, for example, how, physical punishment at school can legitimise violence in other contexts so children bully their peers, and, again, children’s experiences of violence in school can accelerate the risks of violence at home too, both being victims of violence and undertaking violence themselves. In India, Pells and Morrow (2018) illustrate that children’s age influences their experience of violence. Their study shows that, the intensity and extent of violence in school increases between the ages of eight and 12 years, and is underpinned by the belief that bigger children are stronger enough to handle harsher punishments. As the child becomes older and reaches adolescents, however, the nature of violence shifts from physical to more subtle forms of violence such as, insults and humiliation (Pells and Morrow, 2018). Children’s experiences of violence is also related to cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity, where, traditionally, boys are considered stronger and more able to handle the pain than the

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<sup>7</sup> Young Lives is a multi-country collaborative longitudinal research project on childhood poverty that followed 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam over 15 years. The project is led by Department of International Development at the University of Oxford (for more details see Young Lives, 2019)

girls who are softer and more docile (Morrow and Singh, 2014; Pells and Morrow, 2018; Pells *et al.*, 2018). While girls are less likely to experience corporal punishment at school however, they experience multiple other forms of violence in their everyday lives such as sexual harassments on the way to and from home and school, which consequently results in a high rate of drop-out of girls from school, thereby reinforcing other forms of structural inequalities. While recognising that children do attempt to exercise their agency in managing their experiences of violence in such situations, overall, Pells and Morrow (2018) frame children's accounts of violence against the backdrop of poverty and structural inequalities and argue for more contextual understanding of children's lives, and call for an acknowledgement of the socio-economic contexts and realities that constrain children's everyday lives.

Another multi-country study in Italy, Peru, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe, commissioned by UNICEF<sup>8</sup> (Maternowska, Potts and Fry, 2016; Maternowska and Potts, 2017; Maternowska and Fry, 2018; Maternowska *et al.*, 2018), conducted secondary data analysis of peer-reviewed academic papers and national research reports and datasets to explore what drives violence, and then mapped out interventions to prevent violence within these contexts. This on-going action research project applies two frameworks for its data analyses: a socio-ecological model to understand the dynamic relationships at individual, family, community and national levels, and an age and gender framework to analyse violence at the intersection of gender and generation. The research finds violence as a 'fluid and shifting phenomenon' which moves alongside children across a range of time and spaces and recognises that children's experiences of violence is closely linked to the relationships structures and power dynamics within families, peers, and communities (Maternowska *et al.*, 2018, p. 5). The study proposes a 'child-centred integrated framework to violence prevention' which offers an opportunity to explore both structural and institutional factors alongside risks and protective factors that shape children's experiences of violence in diverse contexts (Maternowska *et al.*, 2018, p. 75). To this end, Maternowska *et al.* (2018) consider place (e.g. children's home, school, play area) as the key risk factor, and argue for thorough explorations of children's risks across places which may provide insights into specific interventions. As with Young Lives, this UNICEF research pointed to a number of hidden forms of violence across the country, such as structural violence (e.g. poverty, gender inequality, and patriarchal norms) and institutional inadequacy

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<sup>8</sup> Young Lives has also collaborated with UNICEF's Office of Research – Innocenti, in their multi-country study on the drivers of violence affecting children in Italy, Peru, Vietnam and Zimbabwe (for more details see UNICEF, 2019).

(e.g. ineffective child protection/ legal system) which exacerbate the inequalities across social groups (Maternowska *et al.*, 2018).

In the context of socio-structural constraints and inequalities which affect children's everyday lives, children's work and education are a site of further exploration of such complexities. A number of studies sketch a complex and intertwined relationship between children's work and education, where attending schools and engaging in work can be both the symptoms and causes of everyday violence (Morrow and Boyden, 2018; Bourdillon, 2019). International child rights policies, as well as sustainable development goals (SDG)<sup>9</sup>, consider formal learning as integral to ideal childhoods and education as a source of protection: whereas, in contrast, work is perceived as a risk to children's wellbeing, particularly if work affects children's schooling (Bourdillon, 2019; see also United Nations, 2019a, 2019b). This underpins the belief, as Wells (2015, p. 93) notes, that 'school is a panacea for all kinds of problems, including early pregnancy, poor sexual health, gender inequality and, of course, child labour'. However, research shows formal schooling cannot guarantee the end of any of the above: neither can it guarantee employment, nor it is necessarily a route out of poverty (Parkes, 2015; Boyden *et al.*, 2019). Everyday violence in the forms of inequalities and power hierarchies is a powerful force that can restrict children's opportunities for learning (Morrow and Boyden, 2018).

Based on the above discussion of violence in general, and in the context of children's experiences in particular, it appears that different forms of entanglements and ambivalence, often structurally and routinely embedded, can shape children's experiences of everyday violence in diverse contexts. It therefore seems a relevant exercise to explore how children negotiate and exercise their agency in response to their experiences of everyday violence.

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<sup>9</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are a collection of 17 global goals adopted by all UN member states in the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. The countries are working in a global partnership towards achieving the targets by 2030 to eradicate poverty and other forms of deprivation by taking strategies to improve the conditions on health, education, reduce inequality and enhancing economic growth (United Nations, 2019a).

### 1.3 Conceptualising children's agency

Having provided a critical review of the concept of everyday violence, I now discuss children's agency, drawing on recent work in Childhood Studies. While children's agency has been widely discussed from a range of viewpoints, considering the scope and capacity of my study, I find it helpful to take a relational focus on children's agency, linking discussions of everyday violence and children's agency (section 1.3.1) with discussion of gender, generation, structures, and spaces (1.3.2).

A paradigm shift in theorising childhood in the 1990s recognised children as social agents and active social actors who contribute to shaping their own experiences (James and Prout, 1997; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998). Children, in this line of thinking, were perceived as individual entities, who are socially constructed and contextually comprehended, of interest for what they are in the present instead of beings engaged on a linear journey into adulthood. This theoretical direction in understanding childhood as a social construction provided an 'interpretive frame' for contextualising children's everyday experiences often in relation to children's social context and their agency (Prout and James, 1997, p. 8). While this theorisation is no longer very new (see Tisdall and Punch, 2012), some of the central ideas of these studies – particularly the notion of the cultural construction of childhood and the importance (and difficulties) of understanding children's agency – are central to my study.

Children's agency has lain at the core of Childhood Studies since its earliest days (James and Prout, 1997; Tisdall and Punch, 2012; Esser *et al.*, 2016b). The emphasis on children's agency shifted attention from considering children as passive objects to active social actors who can shape their own lives. In line with this view, Stephens (1995, p. 3) placed emphasis on children's agency in order to understand how children 'experience, understand, and, perhaps, resist or reshape, the complex, frequently contradictory cultural politics that inform their daily lives'. This opened up opportunities to explore further, how children, together with adults, are active social actors who can take part, influence, and shape the world around them.

Even though children's agency is a much-discussed topic, there has not been any uniform theorisation of agency in Childhood Studies. Bluebond-Langner and Korbin

(2007, p. 242) raised some early concerns about the ambiguity of children's agency by interrogating the 'nature', 'degree', and 'impact' of children's agency. Because of this ambiguity in defining agency, Tisdall and Punch (2012, p. 256) described it as 'a contested and scrutinised concept', which, they consider, needs to be examined through a more critical and contested lens. Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2013, p. 363) also recognised that children's agency is a 'much used but largely unexamined concept'. Punch has summarised ways of defining children's agency over the last decade:

- ability "to choose to do things" (Mizen & Ofosu-Kusi, 2013, p. 363).
- children's capacity to do (Oswell, 2013, p. 3).
- ability to act creatively and make things happen (James, 2009, p. 42).

(Punch, 2016, p. 185)

Others have questioned the need to place children's agency so centrally in Childhood Studies. Bluebond-Langner and Korbin (2007, p. 243) for example have asked the question: if agency is so overpowering then what happens to children's vulnerability? They argue that even though children are increasingly understood as having agency, scholars focusing on agency need to be reminded of the fact that children are also vulnerable in society. Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2013, p. 363) find this dichotomy of agency-vulnerability problematic, and hence, with reference to their work with street children in Ghana, take this conversation forward by conceiving 'vulnerability as the basis for human agency'. They see vulnerability as integral to realising agency, for example when children make decisions and choices (e.g. leaving home and living and working on the streets), these should be seen against a backdrop of their social and contextual constraints and realities which may have triggered their decisions to make those choices. This necessitates a detailed examination of 'the meanings that children hold and how these constitute the basis of their actions' (Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013, p. 367). To have a holistic understanding of children's agency, they argue, it is important to dig deep into 'children's perceptions of their vulnerability, frailty and need' (Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013, p. 363). Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2013, p. 365) further argue that children's 'meaningful' agency needs much critical exploration with a more nuanced understanding of how agency is shaped and constructed by children's vulnerability (see also Abebe, 2019; Spyrou 2018).

An emerging body of work argues that, for many years, children's agency has been uncritically celebrated without providing adequate contextual details of the structural

factors and processes that shape and constrain children's experiences (Prout, 2005; Tisdall and Punch, 2012; Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013; Wells and Montgomery, 2014; Esser *et al.*, 2016b; Punch, 2016; Spyrou, 2016b; Hammersley, 2017; Abebe, 2019). Abebe (2019) challenges three predominant assumptions about children's agency: a) agency is individualised, b) agency is universalised, and c) agency develops as children grow up. He argues that excessive focus on individualism glorifies individuals' capacity to exercise free choice while undercutting the influences of socio-structural constraints in children's exercise of agency (Abebe, 2019; see also Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013; Hammersley, 2017; Spyrou, 2018). The other assumption that agency is universal is underpinned by a Westernised notion of childhood inscribed in the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which assumes that all children have the right to participation and their voices need to be heard. Abebe (2019) challenges this notion as it overlooks the wider historical, political, social, and economic contexts that essentially influence and shape the way children exercise their agency (see also Esser *et al.* 2016b; Punch, 2016; Spyrou, 2018). The third assumption that children gain agency as they mature suggests attempts to quantify children's agency, whereas, Abebe (2019) argues children's agency is impossible to normatively assess or quantify. In line with the relational perspective (see next section) of children's agency, scholars consider that agency needs to be understood as an active, continuous and dynamic process – 'as continuum and interdependence' – where children's agency is intertwined with social relationships and interactions within social contexts (Abebe, 2019, p. 1; see also Esser *et al.*, 2016a; Punch, 2016).

### 1.3.1 Relational understanding of children's agency

Despite the prominence of agency as a construct in Childhood Studies it appears, like everyday violence, to be somewhat slippery. Prout (2019), has argued that Childhood Studies sometimes focuses too much on child-centredness and children's autonomy, isolating children from adults and their socio-spatial realities and social networks. Others too have concurred with this and argued for a rethink of the centrality of agency in the field (Esser *et al.*, 2016a; Spyrou, 2016b, 2017, 2018, 2019; Spyrou, Rosen and Cook, 2018; Abebe, 2019; Prout, 2019; Thomas, 2019). Spyrou (2019) situates his argument within a wider ontological turn in the social sciences (based on discourses from feminist, post-humanist, and post-structuralist approaches) where there is a shifting focus from the individual to the relational and the material. He opens up the space to explore further how Childhood Studies has the scope to experience a similar



ontological turn where scholars critically engage in the field to revive the theoretical thinking 'rather than re-orient the field as a whole' (Spyrou, 2019, p. 6). Elsewhere Spyrou (2018, p. 42) states:

Destabilizing and de-essentializing the child through a relational lens, moving from singularity to multiplicity and introducing more nuanced understanding of power and its effects on knowledge all constitute critical engagements with knowledge production as a practice.

Spyrou (2019) argues that, for many years, Childhood Studies' inclination towards child-centredness confined it within a circle that failed to fully appreciate childhood and children's experiences from a wider social, structural, spatial, generational and contextual perspective. Like Prout, Spyrou and a few other scholars see the potential for a relational ontological turn in Childhood Studies that would enable researchers to 'decentre' the child and 'reimagine' childhood by moving beyond a fixation on children's voices and perspectives while exploring children's everyday experiences within interactional contexts (Spyrou, 2017, 2018; Spyrou, Rosen and Cook, 2018; Abebe, 2019; Prout, 2019). The relational turn in Childhood Studies encourages scholars to explore children's lives in relation to other relationships so that children's experiences are not explored in isolation and to understand how children's experiences are entwined with the broader social and political fabric (Spyrou, 2018). This would then encourage more 'politically committed and morally engaged' research with children (Wells and Montgomery, 2014, p. 4; see also Stephens, 1994; Scheper-Hughes and Sargent, 1998; Montgomery, 2009a).

Considering the focus and scope of this thesis, therefore, I consider children's agency from a relational perspective, and in conjunction with relationships of power in relation to gender, generation, social structures, and spaces. I will elaborate on this in the following section.

### 1.3.2 Relational agency and power: gender, generation, and spaces

Early work in Childhood Studies showed how, for many years, women and children were perceived as a single minority group in society, and the voices of both, and their contributions were reflected narrowly in research (Mayall, 1994; Oakley, 1994; Alanen and Mayall, 2001). Drawing on some of the work of early feminist sociologists,

Montgomery (2009a, p. 39), shows that historically, studies on family relationships rarely recognised the conflicting and complex relationships between women and children. Shulamith Firestone, one of the leading second wave feminists of the 1970s, argued that, 'the heart of women's oppression is her childbearing and child rearing role' (quoted in Montgomery, 2009a, p. 40). Firestone (1970) acknowledged the importance of challenging inherent power imbalances in families by considering childrearing as a social rather than merely a maternal issue, creating scopes for women and children to exercise freedom and autonomy but ultimately saw women's and children's interests as inimical to each others. Oakley (1994, p. 14) states that historically both women and children have been socially constructed as members of the same minority groups because of their physical and cultural characteristics being less than man/adult. Oakley (1994, p. 16) argues, in the name of 'protection', both women and children have been the subject of patriarchal domination, authority and control, which, was rarely examined in terms of intra-familial power relations and generational inequalities. Elsewhere, in her discussions of gendered childhoods, Montgomery (2005, pp. 477, 481) notes that a growing interest to understand age and generation in the studies of children has 'sidelined' gender, where gender has remained 'under-analysed' and has been 'pushed to the margins'. In reference to the importance of understanding gender, Montgomery (2005, p. 478) says, '[y]et the centrality of gender in children's lives is such that the very length of childhood may be determined by gender rather than chronological age, biological changes or socially recognized rites of passage'. The contradictory theoretical underpinnings of women's studies and children's studies either have seen children as a burden to women's gendered childrearing roles, or have studied children as a distinct social category without much interconnection with the roles of carers.

Ennew (1986, 2008, p. 13) argues that any discussion on children's violence must take into account both gender-based and generation-based violence because, '[b]oth are expressions of power inequalities, because power is exerted through the ability, or potential, or right to exercise force'. Ennew, recognising that patriarchy underpins any social relations, considers it critical to understand power-hierarchies in any social relationships. Using a matrix of gender and generation, Ennew (2008, pp. 13-14) shows the intersecting relationships of power across gender and generation. In this matrix, darker shades signify highest power differentials, which show how, under patriarchal relationships of power, men dominate women, boys dominate girls while adults (both men and women) dominate children (Ennew, 2008, p. 14, for a more

detailed analysis of the power matrix and the roles played by age, gender, class, and race see Ennew, 1986). Ennew argues that this power hierarchy is internalised and reinforced by both adults and children, as men and women both dominate children, and older children dominate younger children, hence, contributing towards reproducing cycles of violence.

	Male	Female
Old		
Young		

*Figure 1.1 The intersecting power relations of gender and generation (Ennew, 2008, p. 14)*

Aligning to the above views of the need of deconstruct violence involving women and children, scholars such as Ennew (1986) or Oakley (1994) argue that women and children may well both be oppressed under patriarchy but that they are differently oppressed. They discuss how women might well use (and abuse) their power over children and they called for Childhood Studies to re-imagine children as separate to women with different needs and interests. This further led to calls for a generational understanding of childhood, positioning a generational agenda in parallel to the gender agenda (Alanen, 1994, p. 37). Building on a theorisation of gender inequalities, a generational understanding of childhood offers opportunities to explore the hierarchical power relations between adults and children and explore further children's agency within the context of power relations (Alanen, 1994; Mayall, 2002). Mayall (2002) argues therefore, that any understanding of childhood needs to consider power structures in the relationships between adults and children since power predominantly lies in the hands of the adults (Mayall, 2002, 2012).

The discussions around relationships of power link to the need for relational understanding of children's agency as I discussed in section 1.3.1 and which I will briefly discuss further (Punch, 2007, 2016, Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2010, 2013, Oswell, 2013, 2016; Alderson and Yoshida, 2016; Spyrou, 2018; Esser *et al.*, 2016a; Spyrou, 2016b; Abebe, 2019). Alderson and Yoshida (2016, p. 84) explore power from two different approaches; a) coercive and external power which dominates and oppresses the individual's agency, and, b) internal emancipatory power that takes the individual's agency forward by protesting against oppression and violence. They argue that '[a]gency and structure can only exist in relation to each other, as separate but interacting, partly overlapping entities' (Alderson and Yoshida, 2016, p. 85). In a similar line of argument, Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2010, p. 442) illustrate how, within a context of inescapable insecurities on the streets in Accra, children form reciprocal relationships of trust and mutuality with their peers which can be a practical and viable survival strategy for many. However, such relationships are unstable and likely to be overwhelmed by circumstances and it becomes a major challenge for the children to sustain them, leading to increased vulnerability when these relationships are disrupted, especially when these children are already cut-off from any family contact and social support. By discerning the juxtaposed possibilities and challenges of friendship of children in streets, Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2010) discuss the nuances of children's experiences, where friendship offers relationships of trust, reciprocity, and mutuality on the one hand, while on the other hand, within a context of disparity, friendship can be the reason of isolation and individualism.

Children's relationship with their social world is complex and 'reciprocal relationship of power differences are played out and meanings are constantly being negotiated' (Spyrou, 2006, p. 133). Drawing on his research with Greek Cypriot children, Spyrou (2006, see also 2018) demonstrates how children's exercise of agency often reproduces social inequalities and marginalisation. Spyrou (2006) shows, while discussing their Cypriot identity, children in his research expressed a clear sense of antagonism and hatred towards the Turks, an idea that resonated with adults' discourses in relation to the long-standing hostility between the Turks and the Greeks on the island. Atkinson-Sheppard's (2017b) research with street children in Bangladesh also finds agency problematic in that children join gangs and get involved in organised crimes. She queries the usefulness of using an 'agency lens' in such a context, as this undercuts children's vulnerabilities within the structural and cultural constraints in which they live in (Atkinson-Sheppard, 2017b, p. 425). Thus, she argues

for a rigorous consideration of the contexts and conditions in which some children take the decision to get involved in organised criminal groups. Bringing together discussions on children's experiences of violence in everyday lives, Wells and Montgomery (2014) argue for a 'social recognition' of children as vulnerable persons – both due to the materiality of their bodies, and their social exclusion from full participation – while at the same time recognising the underlying forms of violence to which children are exposed in their everyday lives. They claim that until and unless the 'role of violence in making the world' is acknowledged, it will not be possible to implement children's rights to protection (Wells and Montgomery, 2014, p. 9).

It is against the backdrop of interconnections of agency and power that Punch (2016, p. 186) explores power from a relational perspective, viewing the lives of children and adults as connected to 'negotiated interdependence' across social relations and spaces (see also Punch, 2001a, 2001b, 2007; Punch *et al.*, 2007). Elsewhere, Punch (2007, p. 151) calls for an exploration of 'two-way flow of power' where both adults and children influence one another and there is an interplay and negotiation of power within both inter-generational and intra-generational relationships. Punch (2007, p. 162) finds it crucial to understand the 'changing degrees of power and powerlessness' between children and adults, so that children can be 'both powerful and powerless simultaneously with respect to different aspects of their social worlds'. Punch *et al.* (2007, p. 210) further argue for more critical explorations of the complex ways power circulates around every day spaces and places where children navigate their agency in relation to the '*power of place* and *power in place*' [emphasis in original]. They illustrate, '[w]hilst power can be oppressive and constraining, it can also be enabling, whereby young people manage to exercise power, on their own and with other young people, in their daily lives in order to balance adult demands with their own needs and desires'. In similar line of thoughts, Alderson and Yoshida (2016), with reference to their work with children in schools in Tanzania, show how children often make active decisions to remain silent in the face of adults' authority. They argue that because of the inter-generational practices of adults and children in the society, children prefer to remain silent in the face of adults' authority, as otherwise they would be considered as 'bad' by adults (Alderson and Yoshida, 2016, p. 88). Similarly, Spyrou (2016a) argues that silence is not the opposite of or the absence of voice; instead, it is an integral part of children's agency. He illustrates, because of the generational power hierarchy, adults' authority often silences children, while, at the same time, children also willingly prefer to remain silent as a way of expressing respect and courtesy to adults.

Having reviewed the discussions on relational understanding of children's agency in relation to power, I now analyse childhood and children's experiences of everyday violence and protection in the context of Bangladesh.

#### 1.4 Childhood, everyday violence and child protection in Bangladesh

The situation of children in Bangladesh is rapidly changing and there are an increasing number of policies which put in place provisions for children's rights and protection. There have also been some improvements in certain areas of childhood concerns but as yet, very limited work exists on children's experiences of violence and abuse on a day to day basis and no research on whether this violence is increasing in their lives. Since the ratification of the UNCRC in 1990, Bangladesh is considered to have made significant progress in bringing positive changes to the lives of children, particularly in terms of primary school enrolment, poverty alleviation, lowering the infant and under-five mortality rate, and reducing communicable diseases (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2015). Over the years, laws have evolved and updated, and now several laws and policies are in place in Bangladesh including the National Children Policy 2011 and the Children Act 2013, which cover issues related to children's rights and protection. However, these developments cannot evade the reality that children in Bangladesh still experience considerable violence in their everyday lives, and suffer from poverty (White, 2002b; Rashid, 2007; Camfield, Streuli and Woodhead, 2009), physical punishments at home, in school and at work (Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children, 2018), are deprived of education, and are prone to exploitation at work (Kabeer, Nambissan and Subrahmanian, 2003; Heissler, 2012; Jensen, 2014; Quattri and Watkins, 2019), violence in streets (Khair, 2001; Conticini and Hulme, 2007; Atkinson-Sheppard, 2017b) and sexual harassments and abuse (UNICEF, 2011; Breaking the Silence, 2015). A child rights situation monitoring report documents incidents of 164 rapes, 19 gang rapes, 111 murders and 165 deaths by road accidents that were reported in national dailies during January to March 2019 (Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, 2019)<sup>10</sup>. The report, however, can only capture the most extreme cases of child violence. Routine and mundane experiences of violence in the form of physical punishments, sexual harassments and

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<sup>10</sup> Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum is a national network of NGOs working on children's rights in Bangladesh (see BSAF, 2019). As part of their advocacy activities, BSAF monitors newspaper articles to track children's rights violation situation across Bangladesh.

gender-based violence are often considered too predictable and ordinary to make the news.

Before I examine the context of childhood experiences in Bangladesh, particularly connecting violence and protection, I will describe briefly how 'childhood' is understood in Bangladesh in the first place.

#### 1.4.1 Contextualising 'childhood' in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, even though legally anyone under the age of 18 is a child, notions of child and childhood remain contested. The idea of a child differs in relation to a child's gender, practices across generations, size, competency, religion and ethnicity, regional location, marital status, and social roles (Blanchet, 1996; White, 2002b; Kabeer, Nambissan and Subrahmanian, 2003; Ahsan, 2015). The literal translation of a child and childhood in Bangla is *shishu* and *shoishob* which are mostly used in formal discourses. Occasionally *kishor* and *kishori* terms are used to denote adolescent boys and girls respectively, though they are not usually used in daily conversations. In an everyday context, a young child is referred to as *bachcha* (kid) and an older child is identified by his/her gender: a girl is *meye* (e.g. *boro meye* for older girl, and *chhoto meye* for young girl) and a boy is *chele* (e.g. *boro chele* for older boy, and *chhoto chele* for young boy). However, it is useful to note that the transition or process from a young child to an older child, or from a child to an adult, is not straightforward, rather it is fluid and blurred. White (2002b, p. 731) states that the transition happens in 'gradual, uneven, and often contradictory ways' which varies depending on the cultural and political contexts. There is a common tendency among people to align with Islamic religious perspectives where a child is considered *baleg* (matured/grown up) once s/he shows signs of pubertal changes. Puberty is a crucial milestone of a child's development in Bangladesh as a child's gender identity becomes prominent hereafter. Roles at home, mobility in public space, decisions in relation to marriage and work, and opportunities to play are significantly defined by a child's gender in the post-pubertal stage.

#### 1.4.2 Childhood, gender norms and cultural practices

Gender is an important construct in conceptualising children and childhood in Bangladesh. Cultural norms in Bangladesh set different standards for girls and boys in relation to what constitutes an 'ideal' or 'good' childhood (Kabeer, Huq and Mahmud, 2014; Ahsan, 2015; UNICEF, 2018). The notion of *ijjat* (honour, respectability) is viewed as an important element of what constitutes an ideal and good child in many Muslim and Hindu societies in South Asia (Chakraborty, 2009; Heissler, 2012; White, 2012; Ahsan, 2015; Homan, 2017; UNICEF, 2018). The literal translation of *ijjat* is honour and respect, whereas the practical application is more nuanced; shifting from protecting personal bodily integrity and chastity to upholding family honour and respect. To protect *ijjat*, girls are taught to behave with modesty which is performed through the way they talk, behave, dress, and use space (Del Franco, 2014). The issue of *ijjat* is strongly linked to parents' decision about their daughters' marriages. Parents often view marriage as a safer alternative to 'physical and reputational attacks' that girls experience in everyday lives (White, 2015, p. 132). If any girl is sexually harassed before their marriage then parents fear that this would bring shame to the girl as well as the family, which would lower the chance of the girl to receive a respectable marriage proposal.

Ahsan (2015) conducted research with children in Tangail, Bangladesh, to examine children's participation in decision-making processes in both private and public spaces in Bangladesh. Her research illustrates that the 'fear of breaking *purdah* and maintaining bodily integrity', combined with the lesser 'economic value' of girls has been influential in girls' limited opportunities/restrictions in expressing themselves in family, school as well as public spaces (Ahsan, 2015, p. 90). She also notes, however, that boys too experience restrictions in mobility and participation in public spaces albeit for very different reasons (Ahsan, 2015; see also Camfield, Rashid and Sultan, 2017; UNICEF, 2018). Ahsan (2015) finds boys often miss out opportunities to play and engage in recreational activities, as they need to engage in paid work quite early in order to take over financial responsibilities of their families. Even though men unquestionably exercise power in private spaces, in a socio-economically challenging situation, poorer men are becoming marginalised and slipping down the power hierarchies and subject to greater inequalities in public spaces. This lack of power triggers anger and frustrations in men which manifests itself in the way they exercise



power through violent and abusive actions in private spaces (Camfield, Rashid and Sultan, 2017; UNICEF, 2018).

UNICEF (2018) conducted a desk review of literature to understand the intersections of structural violence and interpersonal violence, and its influences on children across several countries in South Asia. The review draws attention to the unequal power relations and inequalities across gender, generation, ethnicity, class, caste, and ethnic groups that function as key drivers for structural violence against children (UNICEF, 2018). The report also found that son preference is another key factor relating to discrimination and violence against girls (UNICEF, 2018; see also Kabeer, Huq and Mahmud, 2014). This review found that many parents prefer sons in the belief or hopes that their sons would take over family's responsibilities and would look after their elderly parents as they grow up. In general, a cultural belief in Bangladesh prevails that daughters belong to the parents' family only temporarily, and the *shwoshur bari* (father-in-law's house) or *shwamir bari* (husband's house) is a daughter's real and ultimate home. Many parents, especially in contexts of poverty therefore, consider daughters as a *bojha* (burden) as they do not see any productive return on their investment in their daughters' education. Parents, in such contexts, often find early marriage a reliable option to defray the expenses of raising daughters.

Gender inequality and discrimination perpetuate violence in many ways, and it particularly becomes visible when girls are married before the legal age of marriage. In Bangladesh, the minimum age of marriage for girls is 18 and for boys 21. However, the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017 includes a clause allowing for special circumstances which allow parents to let their children get married before the legal age if that is for 'the best interest of child'<sup>11</sup> (Bangladesh Government Press, 2017). The demographic and health survey of 2014 in Bangladesh reports that the median age of marriage of women now aged between 20-49 years old has increased from 14.4 years in 1993-94 to 16.1 years in 2014 (National Institute of Population Research and Training, ICF International and Mitra and Associates, 2016). There has been considerable progress in the reduction of percentage of women between 20-24 years age therefore who were married before they were 18 (from 65 percent in 2011 to 59 percent in 2014). The report also shows that half of the women who were married

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<sup>11</sup> 'The best interest of the child' is one general principle of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – the most widely ratified human rights treaty that has been ratified all UN countries other than the US. Article 3 of the UNCRC particularly recognises children's best interests to be of primary consideration (United Nations, 2019b).

before they were 18, expressed that they would have preferred to get married later (National Institute of Population Research and Training, ICF International and Mitra and Associates, 2016).

The above picture of gender inequality in Bangladesh affecting childhood experiences, however, should not cloud the fact that the country has achieved successes in recent times in raising gender parity – particularly in relation to other countries in the region. The global gender gap index of 2018 reports that Bangladesh is the most gender equal country in South Asia (World Economic Forum, 2018). Out of 149 countries, Bangladesh ranks globally at 48 with India ranking at 108, and Pakistan at 148 (World Economic Forum, 2018). This World Economic Forum report considers progress towards gender parity in four thematic areas: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Bangladesh has made significant progress by addressing the gender gap in political empowerment (scored among top five in the global list on the political empowerment sub-index), while it still lags behind in bringing gender parity into the labour force (World Economic Forum, 2018). Drawing on comparative discussions of economic growth in Bangladesh, Sobhan (2000) pointed out that gender beliefs and norms in Bangladesh were more fluid and less deeply rooted than the caste-based social structures in India and Pakistan and saw the possibility of Bangladesh becoming a hub for liberal practices on women's rights and gender equality, enhancing economic development opportunities within Bangladesh. More recently, a comparative study by Kabeer, Huq and Mahmud (2014) on changing attitudes towards sons and daughters in Bangladesh and India also shows a weakening trend of son preference in Bangladesh. The study considers that the 'fluidity in social relations and the ease with which new norms, values, and ideas travel across society' may have distinguished Bangladesh from neighbouring South Asian countries in progress on gender equality and human development (Kabeer, Huq and Mahmud, 2014, p. 157).

### 1.4.3 Childhood and generational relationships in Bangladesh

Despite these challenges however, childhood and children's experiences in Bangladesh remain interlinked to generational relationships and the power inequalities embedded in those relationships (Kabeer, 2000; White, 2002b; Bissell, 2003; Kabeer and Mahmud, 2009; Ahsan, 2015; see also Alanen, 1994; Mayall, 2002). White (2007) argues that in understanding childhood and child-adult relationships in Bangladesh,

'academic and policy communities' have often used an 'external and problem-focused' lens and portrayed the child rights situation in Bangladesh negatively to the global audience. Her more grounded exploration of the culture and practices of childhood in Bangladesh shows a duality, where 'both the subordination and the adoration of children arise within Bangladeshi culture' and thus she emphasises the importance of understanding children's rights within varied forms of social and cultural differences, such as gender, race, religion among others (White, 2007, p. 507).

Drawing on data from her long-term research in both rural and urban Bangladesh, White (2007, p. 512) explores the idea of 'guardianship' as one of the most important ways in which children and their rights are realised in the context of Bangladesh. A child's position in any community is usually defined by their relationships and dependence on the family members, primarily the father who is seen as the guardian of the family (White, 2007, p. 513). Commonly in the context of Bangladesh, a man, as a guardian in a family, is responsible to maintain his wife as well as his children. With the marriage of a daughter, however, a father hands over the guardianship while the son-in-law takes over the responsibility of his wife. A woman in a family does not have authority of guardianship over her children. However, she is entitled to receive maintenance from her sons as a woman's share of her husband's property rests at the hand of her sons. When a father is absent or unable to fulfil the role of a guardian, an elder son usually (or grandparents/ paternal uncles/ mother if the brother is younger) takes over the family responsibility. Mothers remain the primary caregivers of their children, yet, as White (2007, p. 513) says, the role of a mother is 'of love not law, softness not power, understanding not discipline, intimacy not demand'. The role of father and mother are not always so 'clear-cut' however, as White (2007) shows mothers may also take the role of authority and power, while fathers take the role of care and affection. Guardianship according to White (2007), is based on relations of authority, power, adoration, and respect, where adults are allowed to discipline, control, as well as adore children, while children are expected to be guided by adults' authorities and guardianships. White (2007, p. 514) states:

Fundamental to the idiom of guardianship is the responsibility to provide protection and control. This is backed up by the sanction of violence: if children or women misbehave, most people agree that their guardians have the right to beat them. This is again bound up with the status of the guardian: if his wife or children misbehave, he is dishonoured, and the regard he holds as a man amongst men is under threat. The dynamic between protection and control describes a field of tension. Having a guardian offers you

protection from the predation of others – women and children who are on their own are chronically vulnerable to direct assault and slanderous gossip. At the same time, the guardian relationship is deeply invested in power, which can be itself the source of major abuse.

The notion of guardianship is also reciprocal: White's (2007, p. 515) research shows that children in Bangladesh have a strong sense of 'mutual love and attachment' to their parents. Thus, children generally have a sense of 'duty of care' for their parents as they become older. However, the reality is often in contrast to what is expected which can create insecurity and stress among many parents. The cycle of inter-generational responsibility and relationships continues to rollover in this process which passes over structure of guardianships across generations.

In the absence of any structured social protection system, and in the context of poverty in Bangladesh, adults and children embrace relationships of dependency through 'inter-generational contracts' (Kabeer, 2000; Kabeer, Nambissan and Subrahmanian, 2003). Kabeer (2000) argues that cultural norms and the continued valuing of inter-generational responsibility leads adults to invest their care, affection, and resources in children with the expectation that their children will look after them when parents need it the most. Reciprocal relationships and inter-generational contracts work at two levels: at the community and societal level where there is a shared understanding about mutual responsibilities, but also at the family level where expectations and responsibilities are set from the perspectives of individuals/families (Kabeer, Nambissan and Subrahmanian, 2003). Kabeer and her colleagues (2003) describe a complex scenario of trade-offs that parents must make in relation to their decisions about investments in education and sending their children off to work. When parents invest in their children's education they must calculate the risks as to whether children's payback would be compatible with their sacrifices as parents (Kabeer, Nambissan and Subrahmanian, 2003, p. 22). Elsewhere, Bissell's (2003) work with children in Dhaka sheds light on the reciprocal nature of inter-generational relationships, where children's economic contribution supports the family's income, thereby giving many children the power to exercise agency in decision making processes – opportunities that otherwise are not practised in normative adult-child power dynamics in Bangladesh.

#### 1.4.4 Childhood in urban slums in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, around 2.2 million people live in 13,943 slums across the country (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Rapid and unplanned urbanisation has led to a situation in which the infrastructure is unable to cater to the needs of an enormous number of people who have internally migrated to cities and end up living in slums. Studies show that, in the context of urban slums in Bangladesh, endemic poverty, lack of access to basic services, limited employment opportunities, prevalent power dynamics (e.g. between local authorities and communities, and amongst people in communities), and political conflicts, perpetuate inequalities, violence and vulnerability among slum residents (Ahmed and Johnson, 2014; Rashid, 2018). The power that is associated with the spaces and places of slums reproduces crime, insecurity, and everyday poverty and this critically influences the way children experience violence in everyday contexts (Rashid, 2018).

Kabeer and Mahmud (2009, p. 16) state that the implicit insecurities in low-income households 'could not be reduced to specific threats and events but were woven into the stressful fabric of daily life in urban slum neighbourhoods'. Everyday risks in slums depend on the physical socio-spatial dynamics of these neighbourhoods, the structure of livelihood opportunities (e.g. informal casual day labour), drugs, gambling, crimes and generalised precariousness (Kabeer and Mahmud, 2009). Their study also recognises the social relationships of power that prevail in slum neighbourhoods such as the relationships of power between local politicians, businesspersons, labourers, and drug users that reproduce and perpetuate violence in both children's and adults' everyday contexts.

Atkinson-Sheppard examines Bangladeshi children's involvement as workers in organised mafia groups where children living in slums and on the streets become part of *mastaan* (mafia) gang through selling drugs, carrying weapons, engaging in political violence and even contract killing (Atkinson-Sheppard, 2016, 2017b, 2017a, 2018). Slums in Bangladesh are strongly controlled by *mastaans* who, in liaison with corrupt police and politicians, recruit both adults and children as gang members (Atkinson-Sheppard, 2017a). Atkinson-Sheppard (2017a, p. 248) shows, *Mastaans* work as 'patrons' where they offer people 'services' and 'social protection', and offer children protection from 'rival gangs'. Her research shows, 'by engaging young people in organised crime; *mastaans* provide children with a job, a mechanism to secure

connections, essential for their survival' (Atkinson-Sheppard, 2017a, p. 248). Considering children living in slums and streets operate in '*mastaan*'s domain' – which are places that *mastaans* 'control, monopolise and exploit', Atkinson-Sheppard (2017a, p. 251) considers it pivotal to explore the complexity of children's lives in relation to gangs in such contexts.

In contrast to the views above, Ahmed (2003, p. 18), however, does not see slums as essentially a 'social space of despair'; instead she finds them a 'dynamic place' where children and adults constantly struggle to win against the odds they experience in their everyday lives. With growing uncertainty over men's steady income and social changes in the form of women's increasing economic contribution to the family, combined with education and work options for children, Ahmed (2003) considers that there have been significant shifts in household power dynamics in slums. Ahmed's (2003) study shows that children's conformity to adults' authority does not signify entire passivity or helplessness. Similar to women's negotiation strategies with men, children also maintain a 'gentle subversive image' as they continue their 'silent negotiations' with adults without unsettling the dominant power dynamics in slum contexts (Ahmed, 2003, p. 240). Ahmed (2003, p. 239) goes on to argue that 'children learn to utilize parental precariousness to allow them to share power, which they do not jeopardise by rebellious behaviour as they maintain their dependent status on the surface'. Even when adults hold their position of power, authority, and guardianship, children continue to negotiate the boundaries in a benign way (Ahmed, 2003).

#### 1.4.5 Contested notions of children's education and work

Bangladesh has demonstrated progress in education, particularly in terms of access and gender equity, as well as improvement in education which has resulted in economic development (Quattri and Watkins, 2016, 2019; The World Bank, 2016). However, in line with my discussions on the contested notion of children's work and education in the majority world (section 1.2.1), in the context of an increasing urban economy in Bangladesh, the relationship between children's work and education continues to be complex (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2015; Quattri and Watkins, 2016, 2019). A large scale survey in slums in Dhaka examines the relationships between child labour and education and identifies a 'destructive power of the two-way interaction between child labour and educational disadvantage' (Quattri and Watkins, 2016, p. 68). While on the one hand children's work significantly contributes to families'

income, on the other hand, the report shows poor education system results in high drop-out rate that increases the supply of child workers in labour market (Quattri and Watkins, 2016). The report shows that many children work long hours (most work more than 42 hours a week), and they are paid in cash and are without formal contracts which make children more vulnerable in the work place.

Education is viewed differently for sons and daughters, contributing to and continuing existing gender based inequalities in the society. Parents value their sons' education, seeing future employment opportunities, while their daughters' education is valued more in relation to their social role and preparation of their marriages (Kabeer and Mahmud, 2009, p. 13). Those who are living in the 'margins of survival', investing in children's education becomes a risk for parents as it demands parents to 'sacrifice current consumption in favour of future returns' (Kabeer and Mahmud, 2009, p. 11; Jensen, 2014; Heissler, 2012; see section 1.5.3). However, Kabeer and Mahmud (2009, p. 11) consider that in the context of uncertainty and vulnerability, it demands unfailing faith about the future, 'about what the future will bring, about which children will survive to take advantage of it, and about their willingness to fulfil their obligations to the generation that made the sacrifice'. Identifying its importance, Kabeer and Mahmud (2009, p. 20), however, flag out the potential of future research to explore children's agency in relation to education aspirations and opportunities in poverty contexts which they considered largely missing in their analytical framework.

A comparative study with 11-16 years old children living in slums and middle-class areas in Dhaka, Bangladesh, explores whether education can be a route out of poverty (Cameron, 2017). The study shows that parental support through private coaching and extra tuition is essential in achieving academic progress in higher secondary schools. However, parents from low-income families in slums have limited resources which negatively affected their children's academic achievements. Children in slums, especially the first generation learners, were often stigmatised and labelled as failures for initial poor performances in class, which later restricted their opportunities for participation, and subsequently reduced scope for academic progress (Ahmed *et al.*, 2007; Cameron, 2017).

While these large-scale, national surveys provide a useful broader context in which to understand the relationship between children's work and education, they do not have the scope to explore contextually the tensions and trade-offs that individual children

and adults experience and negotiate in their everyday lives. Identifying this gap in the literature, I aim to bring out some of the nuances of these tensions, looking at how they shape children's experiences of everyday violence, and what roles children occupy in these discussions.

## 1.5 Summary

This chapter has examined theoretical understandings of everyday violence and childhood. It shed light on children's experiences of everyday violence which are rooted in everyday socio-spatial contexts, social practices, relationships of power, and structures. In line with the contemporary discussions on relational agency, it went on to discuss children's agency in connection with relationships of power in gender and generation. It then moved on to illustrate how gender and generational relationships of power and practices influence childhood and everyday violence in the context of Bangladesh. There is, however, a dearth of research studies which look at these issues in depth in the context of urban slums in Bangladesh and which explore children's experiences of everyday violence. Subsequently little is known about the ways children understand and respond to everyday violence. In this research, therefore, I explore how children, living in an urban slum in Bangladesh, make sense of their everyday lives and experience everyday violence, and how they negotiate their agency within the context of gender and generational relationships of power and precariousness.



## 2 Chapter Two: Research context

### 2.1 Introduction

This brief chapter introduces and contextualises the Urdu-speaking Bihari camp where I worked in. First, I outline how I chose this particular research site and negotiated my access to it. Next, I provide a historical overview of the camp. I then go on to detail my own journey into the field, offering insights into the socio-spatial and structural conditions of the camp.

### 2.2 Negotiating access to the field

From the outset, my aim was to undertake research in an urban slum in Bangladesh, in order to understand how children experience their everyday lives in a context which is compounded by multifaceted complexities. My previous professional experiences as a child protection practitioner in an international NGO, and my knowledge of some of the realities of the children in Bangladesh had infused me with a desire to gain a more nuanced and grounded understanding of the lives and experiences of the children who are living in an urban slum context in Bangladesh. At the start of my doctorate, I wrote to a few organisations, including my previous employer, to identify a community and negotiate access, clearly stating my research purpose and the nature of support that I sought from them. I received positive responses from a few organisations, and finally, I negotiated access with one organisation, which I named *Oikotan*<sup>12</sup>. I was aware that this organisation has a well-established reputation within the communities that it works with, which I believed would be helpful in negotiating introductions to potential research participants. I did not have any particular interest in working with any specific groups or communities, such as the Urdu-speaking Bihari community, on whom I eventually settled. However, the executive director of *Oikotan* informed me that even though the

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<sup>12</sup> The English translation of *Oikotan* is harmony – the pseudonym I have used to suggest the organisation's endeavour to advocate for the rights of children in Bangladesh

camp shares similar socio-economic structures with other urban slums in Bangladesh, the camp has its own uniqueness in everyday struggles because of its historical-political context, which intrigued me. As a Bangladeshi, I was aware of some of the political tensions in the camps and among the Biharis in general, even though I have never been to any of the camps before, neither have I worked with any Biharis. Before I detail more about the research site, I consider it useful to sketch a brief historical background of the camp context.

## 2.3 Historical overview: Urdu-speaking Biharis in Bangladesh

The residents of this camp – commonly known as *Urdu-bhashi* (Urdu-speakers) or Biharis – have their origins in the Indian state of Bihar, and a few other Muslim majority States in India (see Figure 2.1). The partition of India in 1947 at the end of the British colonial rule in India resulted in two independent countries, India, and Pakistan. Concurrently, Pakistan split into two regions, which were geographically situated in two distant locations, West Pakistan (present-day Pakistan) and East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh). During the partition, many Muslims from the Hindu majority India, including a large number of people from Bihar, moved to the Muslim majority East Pakistan (in part because of its geographical proximity) with the hope of making their homeland among others who shared their religion (Redclift, 2016). However, the Biharis were never able to make East Pakistan their ‘home’ despite sharing the majority religion, as there were linguistic, cultural, political, social, and ideological differences between the Urdu-speaking Biharis and Bangla-speaking Bangalis in East Pakistan.

During the post-partition period, many Urdu-speaking Biharis, mostly due to their religious and linguistic associations, sympathised more with the elites of West Pakistan (present day Pakistan) (D’Costa, 2016). The Biharis were considered to be ‘the most militant anti-Bengali and anti-Hindu group in East Pakistan’, feelings rooted in the longstanding Hindu-Muslim communal tensions in the sub-continent (Chowdhury, 2010, p. 1). Thus, they were unable to connect themselves with the ‘Bengali sub-nationalism’ that was flourishing among the Bangalis in East Pakistan (Chowdhury, 2010). The language movement of 1952 – a movement to establish Bangla as the national language of East Pakistan as opposed to Urdu – laid the foundations of Bangali nationalism, and the independence of Bangladesh. Eventually, political

tensions between East Pakistan and West Pakistan turned into a war of independence. After a nine-month-long war, Bangladesh became an independent country in 1971.

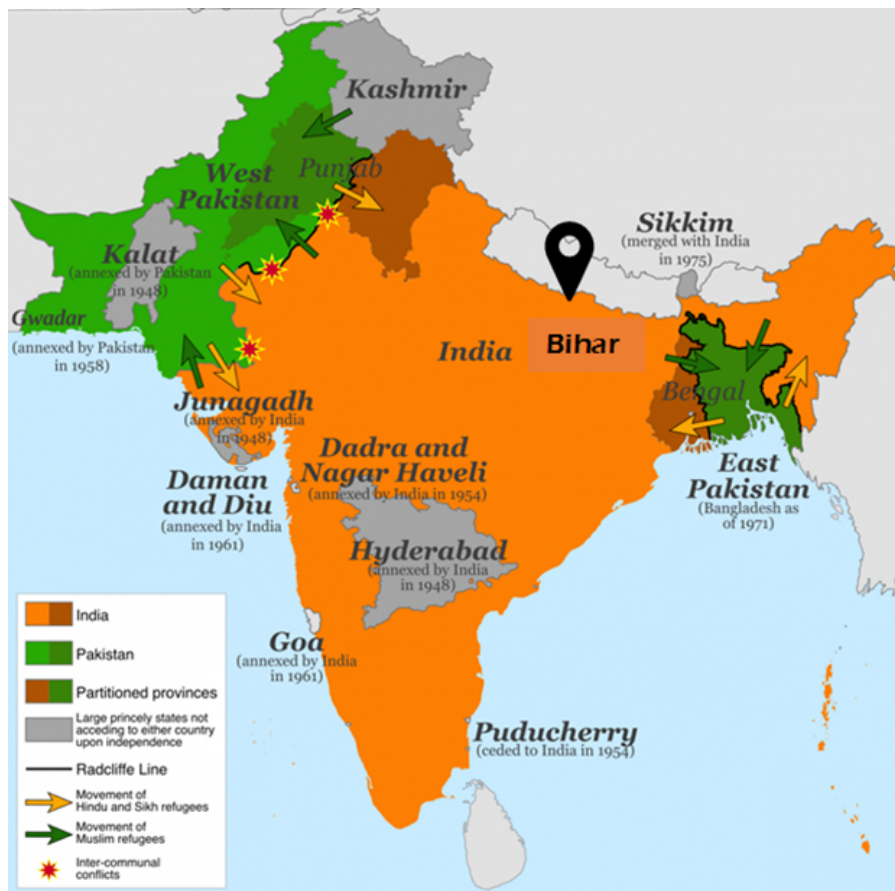


Figure 2.1 Map of India, West Pakistan (present day Pakistan) and East Pakistan (present day Bangladesh) after the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947<sup>13</sup>

Because of these differences of political ideology and nationalistic sentiment between the Biharis and the Bangalis, many Biharis were seen as collaborators with West Pakistan during the Bangladesh liberation war. Hence, Biharis became targets for revenge by some Bangalis, which led many Biharis to leave their homes and take shelters in 'temporary camps', supported by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). To this day, these camps continue to be the 'home' for many Urdu-speaking Biharis and their children. Others, mostly those who had social support from their Bangali friends, either continued to live in their own places, or scattered across Bangladesh, and these non-camp-based Urdu-speaking Biharis have not experienced

<sup>13</sup> The source of the photo - (<http://picturetomorrow.org/map-of-pakistan-and-india/1-20india-20pakistan-in-map-of-pakistan-and-india/>)

the same vulnerabilities as their camp-based peers as they integrated better with Bangali majority.

Following the independence of Bangladesh, many Urdu-speaking Biharis continued to live in those camps 'with deep-rooted uncertainty, poverty, trauma, self-pity and hopelessness' (Paulsen, 2006, p. 55). Other Biharis were sent back to Pakistan, a country where they never belonged, but political tensions between Pakistan and Bangladesh in the newly independent Bangladesh delayed the repatriation process for many. This led many Biharis to stay in Bangladesh and demand their rights to citizenship there, while others pursued their repatriation to Pakistan. The yearning for repatriation among many Biharis reinforced the Bangalis' view of the Biharis as a 'collective political voice that is 'pro-Pakistani'' (Redclift, 2010, p. 314), which was seen as an affront and a challenge to the Bangali nationalism of the majority (Basu, Devine and Wood, 2018). For many years, Bihari people experienced discrimination in accessing basic services and getting employment in formal sectors, as they did not have a right to citizenship in Bangladesh until 2008. This social stigma was accentuated by their linguistic and ethnic identity, and to this day they continue to experience discrimination and even hostility.

In 2008, 37 years after the independence of Bangladesh, the Bihari people finally received rights of citizenship that created the opportunity for them to navigate access to basic services. Nonetheless, the deep and long-standing historical roots of discrimination still have an impact on the lives of the camp-based Bihari people where the cycles of poverty and violence still entangle many. Around 160,000 Urdu speaking people live in 116 recognised slums, popularly known as camps, in a number of urban areas across Bangladesh (UNHCR, 2009). Over the years, the camps moved from their initial temporary makeshifts structures to more permanent (but still flimsy) bamboo and brick-built ones. Disputes over land ownership between the government and the Biharis however prevented any structured refurbishments of the camps. Poverty, poor sanitation, lack of education and employment, lack of access to services and social stigma and discrimination compound the vulnerabilities of the people in these communities (Barkat *et al.*, 2010). A number of studies have been conducted with the Urdu-speaking Bihari communities in Bangladesh, mostly from the perspective of citizenship rights (Redclift, 2011; D'Costa, 2016), identity (Lynch and Cook, 2006; Urbansky, 2009; Persoob, 2014), refugees and migration (Farzana, 2009). However,

there has not been any study which explores the experiences of Urdu-speaking Bihari children's everyday lives.

## 2.4 The research context – an Urdu-speaking Bihari camp in Bangladesh

The camp where I conducted my research is located in a suburb in northern Dhaka where a large number of Biharis settled in during post-partition period. Historically, this area was a concentrated hub of Bihari communities; therefore, around the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, many displaced Biharis relocated to this area and took shelters in a number of temporary camps. With rapid urbanisation over the past few decades, people from across the country have also moved to this suburb, turning this place into an ethnically and culturally diverse area. The suburb has economically advanced over the last decade; however, it is still one of the lower-income areas in Dhaka with many people living in a number of slums and squatter settlements. Around 24 Bihari camps still exist within close proximity of this suburb and I conducted my study in one of those camps, which I named *Bithika*. It is useful to highlight that Bihari camps in Bangladesh are not physically bounded to a certain territory, secluded from the geo-political space of the country. Redclift (2013) finds it useful to consider camps as 'political spaces' in order to understand the historical processes and political complexities that shape the everyday lives of the people living in the camps. Because of its historical origin, the settlement is commonly referred to as a 'camp', however, a number of participants in this research also used the term *basti* (slum) to refer to it. Considering its physical, spatial, material, and economic conditions, the camp can easily be compared to other slums in urban Bangladesh. Against the backdrop of its complex historical and political context, however, the residents of the camp experience some added vulnerabilities and marginalisation in comparison to residents in other slums, which later chapters in this thesis will discuss further.

Adjacent to the camps many Biharis live in structured multi-storied buildings which are popularly known as 'quarters' (see Figure 2.2). Prior to the independence of Bangladesh, such buildings were used as quarters for government officials and their families. After independence, many Biharis were randomly allocated their spaces and it largely came down to luck as to whether they were allocated spaces in camps or

quarters. The Biharis who are now living in these buildings are not necessarily engaged in formal employment instead work largely in the informal sector working as unregistered workers, casual or temporary wage labourers, traders, as well as doing work related to weaving and *karchupi*.

In her research on statelessness and citizenship with Urdu-speaking Biharis, Redclift (2013) shows, that while camp-based Biharis are easily distinguishable because of their poverty, non-camp-based Biharis have merged reasonably well into mainstream Bangladeshi community and, because of the spaces they live in, their wealth, education and culture, are generally able to overlook or escape the stigma, discriminations and prejudices that are usually targeted against Biharis (Redclift, 2013). Consequently, in independent Bangladesh, many camp-based Biharis have experienced othering in two ways; firstly, they were 'othered' by the Bangalis because of their Urdu linguistic profile and their perceived affiliation to (West) Pakistan, both during and after the liberation war of Bangladesh. Secondly, the ideological differences that developed across the camp-based and non-camp based Biharis broke the sense of 'community' and drove Biharis to experience the dichotomies of 'self and othering' within themselves, creating power hierarchies and inequalities among Biharis in general and also within and between those who are still camp-based.



*Figure 2.2 The multi-storied buildings on the left are quarters, while the narrow lanes in-between the buildings take to the camps*

#### 2.4.1 Getting to 'know' the camp

The camp where I conducted this research is located near a main road, which has good connections through transport links to different parts of the city. I used to take a bus from my home that took me to the bus stop near the camp, which would take an hour and a half (depending on the city traffic). It was then around a 1km walk from the bus stop to the camp area. A few steps away from the bus stop, I would hear a blend of languages – Bangla mixed with Urdu, Urdu mixed with Hindi, and that would remind me that I have entered the 'field' (see Figure 2.3). Children usually occupied one side of the street to play football, or played with recycled tyres or were simply running around. As I would enter the camp area, the paths would become narrower and muddier, with broken and open drainage, puddles, and waste-water around, and street



dogs here and there (see Figure 2.4). At the entrance of the camp there is a *madrasa*<sup>14</sup> on the one side, and a food stall (locally known as 'hotel') on the other side. In the morning, children's mesmerising sounds of reciting Quran coming from one end, and aromas of *singara* and *samosa*<sup>15</sup> from the other would usually set the tone of the day for me.



Figure 2.3 The road to the camp (left), the street to the camp

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<sup>14</sup> Islamic religious school

<sup>15</sup> *Singara* and *Samosa* are very popular street snacks in Bangladesh. They are puffed pastry with savoury filling with potatoes and/or chicken/beef/vegetable, best served piping hot straight out of the fryer.





*Figure 2.4 A few lanes inside the camp*

*Oikotan* (the NGO I worked with) has a drop-in-centre in one of the lanes where two social workers run their regular programme activities (see Figure 2.5). On my very first day at the camp, Shampa, one of the social workers of *Oikotan*, gave me a briefing about the camp. She said:

What should I say about the situation of the camp? You will see it yourself. The environment in the camp is very poor. The main problem is they [the children] don't have any education. Most of them work. Those who attend school also drop out soon. Children in this camp get addicted to drugs, [they do] gambling. They are often married off early. Girls are sexually harassed, there is family violence... lots of problems... how much to tell you? You will see it yourself'. (Field notes, at NGO drop-in-centre, 10 April 2016)



Figure 2.5 The NGO drop-in-centre

After that discussion, the NGO social worker invited me to have a walk around the camp. Bokul, an 18-year-old girl who worked as a volunteer at the NGO during that time, led the tour. As I grew up in Dhaka, and have worked on several development projects, I was not surprised to see the realities of slum settlements. Nonetheless, the first glimpses of the camp overwhelmed me. As we walked through the lanes, I saw many one-room houses as well as several narrow *goli* (lanes) pass through between the blocks. A few young children were playing in those narrow lanes and some goats

were wandering around the children. A woman was doing dishes. Another woman was washing clothes. While a child was doing embroidery work with his mum at home, another child was helping her dad in a papermaking *karkhana* (an informal workshop). Suddenly I noticed a group of children, young and older, gathered near a narrow door of a house. Bokul told me that ‘*chatpati* aunty’ is selling homemade *chatpati* (a savoury snack) that is very popular among the local children. As we were walking back to the NGO drop-in-centre, Bokul told me, ‘*Apa* (sister), today I am leading you on the walk, but the funny thing is that I usually don’t come to that far-off lane of the camp’. I asked her, why not? She told me, ‘I don’t feel good’. I did not think it fair to ask her any further details on our first meeting. I ended the day keeping lots of questions within me to reflect on and explore further over the upcoming months of my fieldwork.

The houses in the camp are mostly made of bricks and concrete with roofs made of corrugated iron sheets. Some of the houses have small windows, while some do not have any windows at all, which restricts access to natural light and ventilation. Most of the houses keep their doors open to get air and sunlight in and use curtains to cover their doorways. Most of the houses have one room of 10 square feet space (see Figure 2.6) but those who can afford it have built another room on their roof-top, accessed by very narrow steep stairs (see Figure 2.7). Most of the houses have families comprising of three generations, where one room is shared among all the family members. The camp has two public toilet spaces, which are shared among the 4500 residents of the camp. The houses in the camp do not have any official access to gas, water, and electricity. In the absence of formal structured services, there is informal (and illegal) accesses to utilities run by local *mastaans* (gangs) who, in collusion with the local authority, supply water and electricity to the residents for a high price. The residents use electric stoves inside their homes for everyday cooking, however, during festivals or other occasions they use wood sticks and bricks to cook outside in the lanes. While most of the houses have some access to electricity, only a few people can afford to connect to clean tap water in their homes, thus they mostly rely on the communal water (see Figure 2.8). There are three communal water collection points in the camp which run water twice a day. Some families use one small corner inside their home for washing/showering, which they usually separate with curtains.





*Figure 2.6 Images of a few houses in the camp*



*Figure 2.7 Recently constructed top floors of two houses (left), the stairs to go upstairs*



*Figure 2.8 Communal water collection points (left and middle) and water storage and washing corner inside a house*

There is one government-run primary school<sup>16</sup> within the broader camp catchment area, which prioritises admissions to Bihari children, although the school is open to all children. The head teacher informed me in 2016 that the school had an almost equal ratio of enrolment of children coming from Bihari and non-Bihari communities. Just opposite of the drop-in-centre of *Oikotan*, there is also a small school, and in the lane next to that was an early childhood development centre, both run by two separate NGOs. There are a number of higher secondary schools in the broader suburb, which children from the camp attend alongside other non-camp based Biharis as well as Bangalis. Considering the fact that education in Bangladesh is compulsory and free only until grade five of primary level, many children either do not register in secondary school, or they dropout earlier than completing their national level exams at the end of

<sup>16</sup> In Bangladesh, primary education is for grades one to five (age from 6 to 10), secondary education from grades six to ten (age from 11 to 15), and higher secondary education from grades 11 to 12 (age from 16 to 17). Students take national board certification exams: Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exam at the end of grade 10 and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) exam at the end of grade 12. National Education Policy in Bangladesh (Ministry of Education, 2010) allows for free and compulsory education up to grade five. Thus, as children transition from primary to secondary schooling, a large number of families struggle to manage education expenses, including tuition fees, expenses related to uniforms and stationery, along with fees for private tuitions as the quality of teaching at classrooms is often not sufficient for students to learn without further support of private tutors/ coaching centres. It is useful to note, however, National Education Policy, 2010, has a number of clauses and provisions, including arrangements for pre-primary education for children aged 4-6 years. This clause, however, is only sporadically implemented and is only done so by NGOs or private schools. Due to a lack of funding and resources the government has yet to turn this clause into a reality. At the time of writing (2019) the 2010 National Education Policy is under review process and a draft is awaiting approval from the ministry.



year ten. For a student in higher secondary level education, it takes at least 1000 taka<sup>17</sup> monthly to manage the minimum education expenses per child. This cost increases as private tuition support is often needed as a child prepares for SSC exams. In the context of extreme poverty, it is not surprising that parents in many cases cannot prioritise expenses for their children's education over other basic needs like food and health.



*Figure 2.9 A woman making yarn with a spinning wheel*

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<sup>17</sup> 1 GBP is roughly equivalent to 100 Bangladeshi taka



Figure 2.10 A wooden frame has been set on the bed in preparation of *karchupi* work

In *Bithika* camp, as in many other neighbouring camps, the economy broadly revolves around small trades and workshops, for example, *Benarashi Saree* businesses<sup>18</sup>, hand embroidery work (e.g. *karchupi*, *jardozi*, *jari*, and stone works<sup>19</sup>) or work as barbers<sup>20</sup>, and butchers<sup>21</sup>. The suburb has the largest *Benarashi saree* market in Bangladesh, and the nearby area is known as *Benarashi Palli* (village). Both adults (women and men) and children (girls and boys) to a certain extent, carry out work related to this trade: either through preparing threads, spinning threads (*chorka*), weaving (*taat*) clothes/sarees, designing clothes/sarees with *karchupi* and other embroidery designs,

<sup>18</sup> Biharis are skilled at weaving and designing fine *Benarashi* sarees which have their origin in Benares (Banaras or Varanasi) in Uttar Pradesh in India. Silk fabric is used to weave *Benarashi* sarees, where gold/metallic threads are applied using hand embroidery work to add richness to the designs.

<sup>19</sup> Different forms of hand embroidery styles popular in some regions in South Asia. Usually fine golden, silver, and metallic threads are used to do *karchupi*, *jardozi* and *jari* embroidery designs. Sometimes, small and colourful decorative stones and beads are also used in decorative embroidery work.

<sup>20</sup> Some North Indian Muslim people have their origin in Hajjam community, who are traditionally barbers by profession. Many of their descendants belong to Bihari communities in Bangladesh.

<sup>21</sup> Some people in Bihar, and a few other North Indian Muslim majority regions, have their ancestral lineage with Qassab/Kasai community who are professional butchers and slaughterers of animals. Besides slaughtering animals, many Kasai are also involved in selling and purchasing of animals.

and selling clothes/sarees in the markets (see Figure 2.9). Some families transform their one-room house into a workplace during the day and set up large wooden embroidery frames on their bed to do *karchupi* work (see Figure 2.10). Some run *karkhana* (small workshops/factories) within the camp, where they employ other children and adults to pull together *karchupi* or in weaving work (see Figure 2.11). Many of them also work in the *Benarashi* saree shops in the markets, which are located in the adjacent neighbourhood within the same suburb of the city. Besides these common income-generating activities, men in the camp often work as day labourers in local markets, construction sites or as rickshaw peddlers and auto-rickshaw drivers. Some women work as house-helps outside the camp and a few in garment factories. The usual wage of a day-labourer is around 200-300 taka per day and since they do not have a steady contract, their monthly income varies between 4000 and 5000 takas. Furthermore, available work fluctuates and they often remain jobless for many days/ or even weeks which perpetuate the financial precariousness of the families. Those who have full-time contracts often earn around 8000-10,000 taka monthly.

The work opportunities for girls outside the camp are very limited, while boys often work (mostly having started as apprenticeships) in automobile workshops, as lathe-machine workers, in welding works, metal works, and bus helpers, many of which are classified as hazardous work for children by the government of Bangladesh (ILO, 2016). Children involved in any apprenticeship (e.g. *karchupi*, weaving, or automobiles) usually get 200 taka per week for at least 4-6 hours work every day. Those (mostly women and girls) who are involved in *karchupi* work at home usually get their informal work order through a middle person who negotiate work contracts between traders in the market and artisans in the camp, and are paid in piecemeal rates and earn less than boys doing the same job. The middle-persons are usually women and men from the camp, who have established connections with traders and suppliers outside the camp and thus hold positions of some power in the community. The middle-persons provide raw materials and designs to the artisans, who craft their products accordingly. Crafting a saree, for example, may take two to three days, depending on the design, and for this someone would be paid around 200-300 taka per order. The busiest times for the people involved in this work in the camp are the couple of months prior to Eid, the largest festival for Muslims, while outside this period there are months when the flow of work is slow. In a highly competitive market, however, and with the wide availability of cheaper factory-made products, the demand/value for hand-embroidery or hand-woven sarees has recently dropped.



Therefore, whether, and how often, someone would get a work order often depends on the relationships they have with the middle-persons.



*Figure 2.11 A weaving karkhana (left), a karchupi karkhana*

## 2.5 Summary

This chapter has set out the historical, political, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic contexts of day-to-day life in the camp, contextualising my research in terms of the space of the camp and its people, in preparation for the three data chapters (Chapters Four, Five, and Six). In these chapters I will discuss the understandings and experiences of everyday violence based on the narratives of children and adults who are living in the camp described here. Before I present these findings however, I will, in the following chapter, outline my reflections on ethics and methods in research with children.

## 3 Chapter Three: Research methods

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the ethical and methodological underpinnings of this research. While doing this, it presents how my beliefs have shaped and influenced the way the study moved forward. First, I highlight how the entire research process is embedded in my ethical and reflexive positioning. Then, I shed light on my rationale for embracing the ethnographic research approach. The final sections outline the methods and data analysis processes.

### 3.2 Research with children – ethics, methods, and reflexivity

A large volume of literature in Childhood Studies discusses the ethics and methods of research with children (see for example, Fraser *et al.*, 2005; Christensen and James, 2008b; Tisdall, Davis and Gallagher, 2009; Alderson and Morrow, 2011; Clark *et al.*, 2014). Such work also argues that understandings of children and childhoods influence the way we consider ethics and methods in our research (Morrow, 2009; Alderson and Morrow, 2011). As Morrow states:

The ‘power’ to choose which theoretical standpoint, or way of understanding children, lies with the researcher. The research population studies, the methods used, and crucially the interpretation of the data collected, are all influenced by the view of children taken, and there are obvious ethical implications to this (Morrow, 2008, p. 52).

Based on my understanding of the conceptual frameworks of Childhood Studies, that I discussed in Chapter One, my epistemological positions on children and childhood are embedded in the belief that children are active social actors and their lives and experiences are shaped and influenced by their relationships with their families, peers, and communities, within their specific structural and socio-spatial contexts. Thus, in this research, I use a relational lens to understand the lives and experiences of children

and adults aiming to better understand the everyday experiences of children's lives and to explore the complex interrelations of power in gender and generation (Spyrou, 2018; Spyrou, Rosen and Cook, 2018; Prout, 2019).

Whether research with children is essentially the same or different than research with adults has been much debated (Christensen and Prout, 2002; Punch, 2002; Christensen and James, 2008b; Morrow, 2008). On one end of the spectrum, scholars argue for embracing child-centred or child-friendly methods, while on the other, others argue for the use of methods that they would otherwise use in any research with adults. The majority of scholars, however, including myself, have found that we are somewhere in the middle and while I believe that children are active social actors, there are still a few specific issues that researchers need to consider in research with children. These are related to children's competencies (Morrow, 1999, 2008), their social context (Harden *et al.*, 2000), and to their relationships of power (Ansell, 2001; Punch, 2002). Morrow (1999, 2008) specified that research with children, like any other sociological research with adults, must adopt some standard methodological and ethical considerations, e.g. proper and honest ways of data collection, data processing, analysis, and dissemination, and protection of research participants. She, however, argues that children also have specific needs and vulnerabilities at different ages and thus while considering consent and choosing relevant methods for different age groups of children researchers need to be mindful about different competencies of children (Morrow, 1999, p. 203).

Punch (2002, p. 338) finds it 'too simplistic to consider research with children as one of two extremes: either the same or different from adults'. Instead, she prefers to consider research with children as a continuum where she argues that methodological and ethical considerations in research should factor in children's age, research context and questions, and the researcher's own standpoint about children and childhood in general, arguing that 'ways of seeing children affect ways of listening to children' (Punch, 2002, p. 322). In this study, I neither attempted to take the role of a 'least-adult' (Mandell, 1988) or the role of a friend (Corsaro, 2003). Instead, I preferred to be myself – an adult – who was unaware of, yet interested to explore, the knowledge and practices of the lives of children within the research context (Mayall, 2008).

Punch (2002) argues that unequal power relations of children with adults are embedded in the socio-cultural reality of any adult-centred society, and thus reflexivity

can help researchers to be thoughtful about the methodological and ethical concerns and choices throughout the research project. Punch (2002, p. 323) states:

Reflexivity should be a central part of the research process with children, where researchers critically reflect not only on their role and their assumptions..., but also on the choice of methods and their application.

Spyros (2011, p. 162) further claims that:

No single method can guarantee successful representation in itself. Reflexive research however accepts the messiness, ambiguity, polyvocality, non-factuality and multi-layered nature of meaning in 'stories' that research produces. The quick and easy way is not necessarily the most ethical way; the ethical way necessitates time for reflection'.

The notions of 'decentring' the child, and 'reimagining childhood', as I discussed in Chapter One (section 1.3.1), highlight the importance of the issues of power from both a relational perspective as well as in relationships between researcher and participants (Spyrou, 2018; Spyrou, Rosen and Cook, 2018). I am aware that my own physical size, my age and gender, my ethnicity, and my position of power and privilege are 'pre-inscribed, cannot be disguised and influence the ways the researched read the fieldwork process' (Ansell, 2001, p. 105). Thus, I consider that by being more aware of my own positionality and by being reflexive about my own position of power I can attempt to be critically engaged in the whole research process, explore the ways knowledge is produced in the field, and examine how social relations and power exist between and within the research community as much as between the researcher and the researched (Ansell, 2001; Spyrou, 2018) (see section 3.4 for an elaborated discussion on reflexivity and positionality in this research).

Ethics, in this research, is 'more than merely a principle of conduct in relation to the potential harm and benefit of research', and instead is embedded in the whole research process through the form of a reflexive dialogue (Meloni, Vanthuyne and Rousseau, 2015, p. 108). The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC/2016/2210) reviewed and approved the research protocol of this project (see Appendix A). The ethics application preparation procedure helped me to have clarity over some key ethical considerations: negotiating access and accessing participants, relationships of power between researcher and participants, identifying possible risks

and risk management strategies, privacy and confidentiality, and child safeguarding reporting mechanisms in the field. My professional practices around child protection and child safeguarding along with my reflexive approach helped me to carefully embrace ethical standards throughout, from identifying research questions to shaping the design and methods, to obtaining consent to maintaining confidentiality, to interpretation and analysis of data, onto dissemination of the research (Alderson, 2014; Morrow, 2009), all which I discuss in detail throughout this chapter.

### 3.3 An ethnographic research approach

Drawing attention to the arguments from the sociology of childhood, combined with evidence from the empirical studies on children's experiences of everyday violence, I embraced an ethnographic approach to my research (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004b; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Abebe, 2009; Beazley *et al.*, 2009; Montgomery, 2009a; Spyrou, 2011; McNamee and Seymour, 2012). Researchers argue that 'ethnography may be the most important methodology for studying children' (James and Prout, 1997, p. XIV), where knowledge is produced through the researchers' long-term social interaction with the research participants in the field (Christensen, 2004). Children's experiences and narratives are 'intimately intertwined and conditioned by the very social worlds in which they live, a task for which ethnography is crucially important' (Meloni, Vanthuyne and Rousseau, 2015, p. 119; see also Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007). Moreover, as I intended to explore children's experiences from a relational standpoint, I felt that ethnography would help 'to create dialogical trust relations as well as negotiate power roles', along with an exploration of the power dynamics between the researchers and the research participants (Meloni, Vanthuyne and Rousseau, 2015, p. 119).

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue, that ethnography allows the researchers to start their study with a broader area of interest, in issues related to the lives and experiences of the research participants, while allowing the flexibility to refine and even transform the research questions over the period of time. Bearing in mind my research questions, where I aimed to explore the everyday experiences of children and adults, ethnography appeared to be the most suitable approach which allowed me – the researcher – 'participating in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through

informal and formal interviews' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 3). As I chose an ethnographic approach, I did not have to create or setup any research setting at the outset: instead, from my first entry into the research site I was learning about the everyday lives of my research participants in their everyday contexts. With time, however, as I developed rapport and relationships, I scheduled interviews and group discussions, at times and places of their convenience, which allowed me to conduct flexible and semi-structured conversations and discussions with my research participants.

I undertook ethnographic fieldwork from April to November 2016. During the time of my fieldwork, I stayed at my parents' home in Dhaka, which is around 10 km away from the field site. As I travelled to Bangladesh with my then 3-year-old son, it was more practical and rational for me to stay with my parents instead of renting out space nearer the camp. The nine-month stay in Dhaka was split into two phases. I conducted a pilot study during April and May, which allowed me to reflect on my research processes, approaches, and use of methods and make a few changes before I started my main study in July 2016 which continued until the end of November 2016. I used to travel to the camp for at least 4 days a week, usually from 10 am to 5 pm. I usually reserved the other weekday to transfer and process all data that I collected over the week, which I found beneficial to reflect on the data and update my field notes in a concentrated way.

### 3.4 Reflexivity and the research site

Scholars argue that a reflexive approach helps researchers to be aware of their own positioning and to be mindful about the ways that shape and influence the production of knowledge (Davis, 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Reflexivity in social research reinforces the idea that we, as social beings, are part of the social world we study and thus it is not desirable or even possible to undermine or ignore the researcher's common-sense knowledge (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 18). Reflexivity embraces the belief that the researcher cannot be isolated from the researched and therefore, it is not reasonable to expect that the data generated from the research can remain 'uncontaminated' by the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 15; see also Spyrou, 2018). Neither it is possible to ignore the relationships of power and the differences that exist between the researcher and the

researched (Ansell, 2001). The research site was in a city where I was born and grew up. However, my ethnicity, the language I speak, and my social and academic capital are clearly different from the people who live in the camp. While doing the fieldwork therefore, I was in an ambivalent position: I had the privilege of working at 'home', while at the same time I knew I could never be one of 'them'. On the one hand, I was aware that as my research participants and I are Bangladeshi and Muslim, we largely share cultural and religious practices and customs which were useful points of references in our relationships. On the other hand, however, I was aware that we have very different historical pasts and different socio-economic presents that I discussed in the previous chapter. I knew that these are the 'differences' that I would not be able to alter, so I tried to be aware of the differences and negotiate the best ways to integrate myself into the cultural practices of the people in the camp. Ansell (2001, p. 107) said that 'we are neither absolute insiders nor absolute outsiders among the researched community', and thus we need to 'negotiate between difference and equality' while 'emphasising our connectedness' and I found this insight very helpful in my research.

When I was negotiating my access with *Oikotan*, I experienced some tensions and apprehensions about my possible research site. My worries were triggered by the latest stories that I read about the Bihari communities in the Bangladeshi media which were often stories of chaos, clash, and murder in the camps (Ahmed, 2014; Al Jazeera, 2014; IRIN, 2014; The Guardian, 2014). Besides, I was also worried about how the Biharis would perceive me due to the established tensions around nationalistic and ethnic sentiments between Bangalis and Biharis. Our linguistic identity is also very different – I speak Bangla, the national language of Bangladesh, while, the mother tongue of the Biharis is Urdu, though all my research participants did speak Bangla. My understanding of Urdu/Hindi is fluent, though I never had the chance to speak and practise the language prior to my fieldwork. During many interactions with my participants, I intentionally used a few words and sentences in Urdu/Hindi, which were useful in establishing a connection with research participants (see section 3.7 for a further discussion on the use of language). Similarly, my research participants also negotiated their linguistic preferences while participating in this research. While I was flexible about them using whichever language that they were comfortable with, they mostly chose to speak in Bangla. Moreover, a few children often attempted to use the accent of a 'Bangali' speaker to sound 'proper' in the conversations. The attempts from both of us to negotiate our use of language, however, created spaces to have fun and light-hearted discussions, which helped us to connect more strongly, and eventually,

it created a space of flexibility where neither of us had to be conscious about the language we were using.

My gendered identity and my role as a mother were crucial in negotiating and to some extent downplaying relationships of power and privilege. As a woman, it was easier to establish a bond and a sense of 'sisterhood' with women and girls. Moreover, being a mother, it was easier for me to connect with other mothers, particularly those with young children, as often we had friendly chats about raising children. I was aware however of my position of privilege as a better-off mother although I was also challenged by a few mothers about my own child-rearing practices. In Bangladeshi culture, young children of working parents in middle-income families would normally be raised at home, either by grandparents, extended family members or house helps. In contrast to that, the mothers in the camp who were working outside the camp used to leave their children home either on their own, at the care of their older children (I had one 11-year-old participant who was a carer of her young sister) and/or other family members. Most of the participants found it unconventional that my 3-year-old son was attending a day nursery while I was doing my research in the camp. Some of them expressed their 'sympathy' for me, some 'empathised' for my son, and some pointed out how I was not doing my mothering role properly. I found that in the camp, and in Bangladeshi child-rearing culture in general, I was looked down upon for improper mothering.

My professional experience, academic background, and my academic affiliation with a British University positioned me in a different if not 'higher' and 'better' situation than many of my research participants. However, power is never static and in many interactions with my research participants, I realised that many of them felt empowered and important as I visited their homes and talked to them. One of the research participants, for example, explained how he felt as I went to interview him for this research.

You just told me that you study at a University. Where do you study you said? England, yeah? You are here to talk to me. Now I am learning something from you, and you can learn something from me too. I am getting confidence that someone who is studying in England has come to me to know something about this community. Isn't it a strength of me? Then I should take this forward to something even more positive. This is how people gather strengths by generating knowledge and making use of their brain. I don't



have any education, I am ignorant. Even then, a high-quality [English original], educated person came to talk to me. That person acknowledges me as a good human being. That is my strength. One's action can turn him good. And one's good acts can be one's strength! (Probhat, 40, father, individual interview)

I mentioned in Chapter Two (section 2.2) that, I negotiated access to the field using my previous professional connections. I was mindful about the fluidity of my position as a former child protection practitioner and currently as a researcher and how that might influence and shape the research process. I wanted to position myself as a researcher, though I was aware that I could not entirely isolate/detach my practitioner self. I was introduced to the fieldworkers of *Oikotan* by its executive director (whose office was in a different location). Being a Bangladeshi I was familiar with the hierarchical work culture environment, where I knew that people at workplace are treated according to their job position, along with other considerations of gender and age. In my initial conversations with the field workers of *Oikotan*, I had open conversations about my previous role; however, I deliberately did not expose my specific job title or detail my 'senior' role in the international NGO, as this would unnecessarily create hierarchical positioning in our relationship. However, as we spent lots of time together, and had many conversations about our work on a regular basis, the field workers became comfortable in my presence. In a few instances, they asked me to do some photography for events and sessions and I also prepared and edited a few case studies for their annual reports. My practitioner background often came in handy in establishing a rapport with my research participants. One day I was having a conversation with Milon, 16, when he referred to 'CBCPC' and struggled to explain to me what CBCPC actually is. I asked him whether he was referring to a 'Community-Based Child Protection Committee', which made him excited that I was familiar with the concept. He said, 'Oh, you know it!' I found little interactions like this helped gain the confidence of the participants.

During my initial contact with the NGO while I was preparing for my fieldwork, the executive director informed me about the complexity of the community and asked me to talk to one of the field workers to clarify any issues I might have before I travel to Bangladesh. I extract an excerpt from my research diary that gives a glimpse of the threat that I was anticipating during that time.

Today I gave a call to Sheema, the social worker of my gatekeeper NGO in Dhaka, to discuss a few logistics related to my approaching fieldwork in Bangladesh. In the middle of our conversation, she suddenly cut me off saying, 'Aww, he is bleeding! *Apa*, (sister) I need to cut the call now...there is some mayhem in the community. Can you please call me after half an hour?' I went through some strange feelings throughout that half an hour. I felt worried about the social worker. I felt worried about that unknown camp resident who was bleeding. I was tense about the children and other people who might have got affected by that incident. With a nervous heart, I called the social worker again and asked her what the situation is now. She told me, 'Things are okay now. There has had a fight between two groups. One of them was hit by a stone and was injured. He has been taken to the hospital'. She wanted to reassure me by saying, 'Don't worry. It is a very common scenario in this camp' (Notes from personal research diary, 2 February 2016).

Even though the social worker asked me over the phone not to worry, I did. I was hesitant even to articulate my feelings of threat and worry and this in turn created some ethical dilemmas. Punch (2012, p. 86) argues that even when researchers write personal fieldwork diaries they are often 'apprehensive about being open and honest' about expressing their anxieties and prefer to present the 'sanitised' version of the fieldwork experiences. Possick (2009, p. 861) rightly points out that often researchers feel it 'safer to leave some issues unspoken and unwritten as reporting on dangers needs the researcher to confront painful feelings'. I am glad that I maintained research diaries where, along with the processes of my data collection and data analysis, I jotted down my own confusions and hesitations, my views and feelings about the research participants and the context, without putting any filter on what was going on in my mind. After a year of my return from the field, as I read Possick's (2009) article about her own ethical dilemmas and her reflexive positioning, and revisited my reflective journals and field diaries, I became more confident about articulating the apprehension that I experienced and also saw the value in doing so.

The first telephone conversation with the NGO social worker prior to my travel to Bangladesh, and the later witnessing of clashes, fights, and bloodsheds in the field site made me aware of the physical risk in researching a camp community. Considering my personal safety and security, and because of my gender, I refrained from staying in the field site after dark, as my local knowledge about risks in public spaces and the information that I received from *Oikotan* about the camp made me aware that drug-peddling and other illegal operations were prevalent at nights (see also Montgomery,

2016). At times, I felt unhappy thinking that I was missing out from seeing the research participants in the evenings but I had to prioritise my own safety over the temptation to collect some 'interesting' data after sun-set. I followed the recommendation that 'the presence or likelihood of danger in the field means that careful planning is needed and the relevant safety procedures... should be followed at all times' (Westmarland, 2000, p. 39). Even though I did not plan any fieldwork in the dark and avoided instances that might put myself at risk, as Westmarland (2000) explained, I could not eliminate risk entirely, especially given the daily violence my participants experienced. I factored in some of these risks prior to my fieldwork and discussed these in detail in my research ethics application. My previous professional trainings on child protection, which included sessions on how to stay safe in the field, and child safeguarding, along with my practical experience of directly working with children in vulnerable contexts helped boost my confidence when undertaking this fieldwork.

Later, when I was presenting the findings, I experienced further ethical dilemmas when thinking about how my selection of their narratives might affect the political tensions that already exist among the camp residents, the Bihari political elites, and the government. Even though it is the reality that the camp residents experience vulnerabilities in the everyday context, I was concerned about the dangers of exoticising these vulnerabilities. The Bihari people and the camp receive some international attention because of the geopolitical tensions associated with them (Al Jazeera English, 2017), so I remained aware of the political tensions at all times. It is in fact useful to add that despite the many adversities that the camp residents experience, many Bangalis perceive the camp-residents to be in a more privileged situation than other slum-dwellers in urban Bangladesh (Al Jazeera English, 2017). This is because the Biharis received financial aids from international donor agencies during the early years in post-independence Bangladesh (Al Jazeera English, 2017). I was therefore also afraid I would be stigmatised by the academic community in Bangladesh for my choice of Bihari camp as my research site, when many other communities in Bangladesh experience similar or even more vulnerabilities and violence across diverse contexts. Even though I felt the 'risk of being labelled propagandists for the group' (Possick, 2009, p. 863) that I was studying, I embraced that opportunity believing it to be my professional and ethical responsibility to work with these children, without any unnecessary romanticising about their vulnerabilities. Yet I was always aware of both the emotional and personal threats of this research and found it was always necessary to reflect on any prejudices I have about the Bihari

community and whether I may have had any feeling of shame or embarrassment doing research in an Urdu-speaking Bihari camp in Bangladesh. In order to gain clarity on all these issues I particularly found it useful to maintain a diary, as I was able to express myself through my writing, which helped me to have a conversation with myself, clarify my thoughts, and gain perspectives.

Montgomery (2007) expressed her ethical dilemma in researching in a context where the researcher's own understanding and interpretation of children's rights were problematised by the accounts of the children who sold sex to foreigners. The participants in her research did not consider themselves involved in any harmful work; they believed that they were fulfilling their filial duty to their parents by strategically bringing money home through their relationships with their clients. Montgomery (2007, p. 424) finds that the banal acceptance of what children say can arguably be considered as 'false consciousness' of the children, where the children are 'unable to see their own oppression, or knowing it, refuse to acknowledge it'. However, given the reality of the situation where children have constrained choices and alternatives, Montgomery (2007, p. 425) finds that it is crucial to believe what children said about their decisions and the way they wanted to 'control certain aspects of their lives as active and informed choices among very limited, and very hard, options'. I experienced similar ethical dilemmas in certain occasions, where I was challenged by my own personal and professional ideas about children's rights and protection and the way they came into conflict with the practicalities of the children's everyday experiences. During those circumstances, I took children's narratives at 'face value' without imposing my own interpretations and assumptions on what they said (Morrow, 1999, p. 206).

### 3.5 Selecting participants

As I discussed in section 2.4.1 of Chapter Two, on the very first day in the field in April 2016, even before I approached any research participants, I had a walking tour around the camp, which helped me to orient myself. The warmth I received by the NGO made me feel very comfortable and welcome from the very first day. I invested time in the first few weeks in the field furthering orienting myself, building up relationships with the NGO staff, establishing contacts with some community people, and overall making sense of the camp setting.

As part of their child protection programme, *Oikotan*, in association with the local government, supported specific community groups (e.g. groups for girls, boys, mothers, and fathers), with whom they run different awareness sessions and workshops. There were at least two group sessions every day, while at the same time they provided other routine activities like keeping child protection registers, providing counselling sessions, and giving advice and support in consultation with the community-based child protection committee. For the first few weeks, I attended several sessions that *Oikotan* organised with different community groups at their drop-in-centre where I briefly introduced myself and outlined the broader aims and scope of the research. Those sessions helped me to familiarise myself with the community members, and to slowly build trust and relationships with them, as I responded to any questions they might have had and talked about my research. I distributed information sheets to the participants (see Appendix B for the information sheets and consent forms) who attended the NGO-run sessions, and to a few families that I visited with the NGO social worker. However, I realised that word of mouth was more powerful than information given through information sheets, as most of the adults do not have the reading ability to fully understand the purpose and nature of an information sheet. Discussion with the gatekeeper organisation also informed me that due to low literacy and scepticism about paperwork among the community, distributing information sheets would not be effective. Thus, even though I did distribute information sheets, I preferred to brief people verbally as to their content so that they could ask me questions to clarify any issues and make an informed decision about their participation.

There was a difference between my academic knowledge about consent and the reality of consent procedures in the field. I found that, in most instances, both children and parents were not concerned about giving consent and unquestioningly agreed to take part in this research. One reason for this was, I realised, due to the position of authority that I hold, which meant that they could not think of questioning me about the research purpose or saying no to me. Their unquestioning consent challenged me to become more thoughtful, conscious, and responsible for the whole consent procedure. I felt that it was important that I explain to them the research purpose and their nature of involvement in the research, even in instances when they signed the consent sheet themselves, without reading it properly. I always clarified the content again to make sure that they understood properly and encouraged them to ask me questions. On some occasions, however, when I asked them a few questions to gauge their consent many children laughed at my 'naivety', as it was not culturally appropriate or

representative of accepted generational relationships of power between children and adults. Similarly, when I asked the parents whether they would be interested to be part of this research, they mostly have said, '*ki jante chan, bolen*' (tell me what do you want to know), '*oshubidha nai, ki jiggesh korben, koren*' (no problem, ask me what would you like to ask) without asking me any further questions about when and where their data will be used, or without even waiting for me to explain the purpose of the research. In those contexts, where the participants did not seem interested in discussing ethics and consent, I felt even more responsible to explain the full details about the purpose of the research. Thus consent processes were dialogical and continuous rather than a one-off activity, and were negotiated and re-checked frequently during the research process (Barker and Weller, 2003; Beazley *et al.*, 2009). Participation in the research was voluntarily, and no pressure, promise, or false expectations were made in favour of participation. However, according to local customs and courtesies when I visited the participants and met them for interviews, I used to buy some food or juice.

I used an audio-recorded oral consent procedure for any participants who were unable to read the written consent form due to literacy issues. I gave them the information sheet ahead of time, and on the day we met, I read out the oral script to get consent from that participant. I audio recorded the entire process as proof of their consent and I did not use any paper for the signature. Usually, I gave the participants a few days between the first time I met them to brief them on the information sheet and the day when we audio recorded the oral consent, to allow them to think about whether they really want to take part in this research or not. I found that the process of oral consent worked well in and I did not have to overburden them with reading dense material – especially knowing that they were unable to read and because of the apprehension many felt putting signatures on paper (Morrow, 2009). Once I received consent, I negotiated the nature of the work, the best time and place to meet, and the frequency and duration of the meetings.

In this study, I used purposive and snowball sampling methods to recruit research participants (Marshall, 1996; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). To fulfil the aims of my study, the criteria for my selection of participants were quite open – and broadly included any children and adults living in the camp. I did not have any minimum age of participation in this research; however, the youngest child who voluntarily showed interest to participate in this research was five years old. In line with my discussion in section 1.4.1 in Chapter One, I found that the notion of child and adult are still realised

in relation to gender, generation, marital status and kinship terms, and socio-cultural contexts as opposed to biological age (Montgomery, 2009a; Ahsan, 2015). Even though, legally a 20-year-old does not fall into the category of ‘child’, due to being unmarried, Shiuly and a few other young women between 19-22 years old enthusiastically took part in this research as ‘child’ participants.

*Table 3.1 Participants and methods*

<b>Methods</b>	<b>Child – Female</b>	<b>Child – Male</b>	<b>Adult – Female</b>	<b>Adult – Male</b>	<b>Total Participants</b>
	(5 – 18 years)	(7-18 years)			
<b>Individual interviews</b>	16	9	15	6	46
<b>Group interviews</b>	8	1	10	5	24
<b>Group discussions</b>	19	25	6	12	62
<b>Total</b>	43	35	31	23	132

I initially wanted to make sure that I have an equal number of girls and boys, and women and men as participants. However, this was not possible and among 132 participants<sup>22</sup>, there are 43 girls, 35 boys, 31 women, and 23 men (see Table 3.1 for the detail of the participants). However, I was happy with the range of participants as it fairly represented the diversity of sex, age groups, work, and educational status in the camp. Thus, the recruitment of the research participants happened ‘routinely’ and ‘on an ad-hoc and chance basis’ (Rapley, 2004, p. 17) throughout the fieldwork period, up until two weeks before I finished my fieldwork when I decided that I had ‘enough’

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<sup>22</sup> The total number of participants in this research is 132. Some participants, however, participated in both interview and group discussion. If I count them twice then the total number of participants increase to 152. To present an unduplicated number of participants, in table 3.1, I counted each participant in individual interviews, and I refrained from counting them again in group interviews or group discussions. However, later in this thesis, when I present the number of participants according to the methods, I use the total number of participants who participated in that particular method.

participants for interviews. I made this decision to allow me enough time to follow-up my already recruited participants in the last two weeks of my fieldwork.

Even though I initially recruited research participants through the NGO, I was always open to recruiting participants who were not directly involved with the work that the NGO does. I was aware of the risk of being introduced by the NGO, as I might be perceived as a member of the staff, or someone representing the NGO. Even though both the NGO staff members and I made it clear in different interactions that I was working as an independent researcher and as a postgraduate research student, I realised that some people continued to perceive me as someone associated with *Oikotan* for quite some time. As I worked in the camp for an extended period, and I interacted with people more with community people, it became possible to reiterate my purpose and eliminate any confusion as to my role. In a group discussion, for example, a few children asked me several questions in relation to where I work, who is paying for my study in England, who is paying for the sweets that I gave them, what is the price of the iPad and the recorder that I used, what am I going to do once I go back to England, whether I would come back to Bangladesh or settle down in England and so on. All these informal conversations helped me to explain to them who I am and the scope of my research. One afternoon, I was talking to one of my key informants Binoy when he was with a few of his friends in a small *karchupi* factory in the camp. Towards the end of our discussion, one of his friends asked me what I am going to do with all the recordings. As I started to explain, Binoy interrupted me saying, 'let me explain that'. Even though we were talking in Bangla, Binoy explained to his friend in his local language (Urdu/Hindi), the translation of that excerpt I quote below:

She will write a book. If someone wants to be a soldier, then he needs to attend training. Only then, he can be a soldier. She is here as part of her training. Do you see that she has a pen and paper with her? She will submit this writing. Do you know what novel is? (Binoy's friend nodded). This is something like this. She is writing. She is doing 'research' [English original] on us. She is doing research on vulnerable people. [Then Binoy asks me in Bangla] 'But you are also looking at how children are progressing with studies and exams? You will also be writing about all that, right?' [I nodded, and then Binoy continued talking to his friend again] She is observing. Again, there are some people, maybe three fourths of us are trying to make a difference, and maybe one fourth are not able to do so. She will be writing that too. If someone reads this book, then this might be useful for some development (*unnoyon*) work... to spread information about us. This is the benefit. In addition, the main benefit is that she is



giving her effort to work with us. I mean she is raising her voice. She is raising her voice about us. She is raising a 'slogan' [English original] about us. (Binoy 42, male, participant observation, 3 August 2016)

It was very interesting to observe how Binoy was translating the message to his friend drawing an analogy between my research training with military training, which answered what his friend wanted to know without losing the overall essence of the purpose of my research.

## 3.6 Methods used

### 3.6.1 Participant observation

I collected data mostly through participant observation, with a combination of semi-structured individual interviews, group interviews, and group discussions. As Spyrou (2011, p. 156) remarks, 'social research with children is... a time-consuming enterprise'. He argues that time constraints may not allow researchers to establish rapport with the children which eventually will hinder them from 'accessing deeper layers of children's voices' – voices which are, if not 'more authentic or true', probably more complex and even contradictory (Spyrou, 2011, p. 156). Taking this perspective on board, I engaged with my research participants for an extended period, over a period of nine months, which I believe helped me to get a deeper and nuanced understanding of the children's lives.

Participant observation is considered to be one of the key techniques for ethnographic research, where data is collected through 'spending long periods watching people, coupled with talking to them about what they are doing, thinking and saying, designed to see how they understand their world' (Delamont, 2007, p. 206). As my research questions were related to the experiences and understanding of everyday violence in children's lives, using participant observation as a tool helped me to get myself familiarised with the research context and to be aware of the 'cultures of communication' in the field (Christensen and James, 2008a, p. 1). It was difficult to resist the 'temptation to try to see, hear, and participate in everything that goes on' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 37). However, it was not practically possible (nor, as discussed above, would it have been safe) to observe the participants round the

clock, and thus, I took a 'selective approach' to participant observation (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, p. 37) which allowed the time for productive observation, recording and reflection of data. Thus, instead of any plan to observe and record the entire day, during the initial few weeks of my fieldwork, I was only present in the field to familiarise myself with the research site and gather a general sense about when and where to observe the participants. Over time, as I established a relationships of trust and friendship with my research participants, I started to participate more fully in their daily lives (Montgomery, 2009b).



Figure 3.1 A hand-drawn map of the camp neighbourhood

Ansell (2001, p. 105) has argued that 'knowledge is not produced by the individual observer in isolation, but thorough... locally inflected, varied and fluid discourses'. Thus, during the process of my data collection, I wrote extensive reflexive field notes, both textual, oral and visual, to document my observations, thoughts, and feelings about episodes or instances that caught my attention. This allowed me to reflect on the narratives of the participants and to see the relation of what they said with what they practised in their everyday lives. Spyrou (2011, p. 157) argues that children's voices are complex, multi-layered while their perspectives, like that of adults', change over time, and this is something which Montgomery (2007, p. 422) also experienced as she reflected on 'how to distinguish between what children said in different situations depending on what was expected of them by different people at various times'. Using a range of research tools helped me to observe the participants for over a long period of time, and that allowed me the opportunity to reflect on the actions and accounts of the participants and clarify any confusions that I may have had.

From my initial discussions and my general observations, I realised that different groups of children have some specific times and spaces where they have regular interaction with each other. A group of 10-14-year-old girls, for example, used to gather around 10 am and 4 pm each day, just before and after school, near the water tank to collect their daily supply of water. I became aware that during school holidays, they would meet either at 12-year-old Champa's place, or at the open space nearer 10-year-old Pia and 13-year-old Badhon's place. Another older group of girls, including Shiuly, Shefali, and Sultana would gather at the lane in front of their house, or they would sit at the doorstep with their *karchupi* frame where they would chat and laugh while doing their embroidery. There was a group of boys who used to work outside the camp, and for many of them, Sunday was their weekly day off. I became aware that in order to talk to them I would need to hang around with them on Sundays and so I started to do that, sometimes sitting together at the drop-in-centre, or as they walked around the lanes. It was more difficult to get the adults together in groups, as they were usually occupied in their work, either at home or outside. I mostly observed the adults at their homes, as they were cooking or doing *karchupi* work after they returned from their work outside the camp or spending time with their children. On a few occasions, I met children and adults in their workplaces inside the camp, mostly in the small workshops where they do weaving or *karchupi* work.

While I audio-recorded most of my observations, it was not always possible to turn on the recorder. On occasions, for example, I was chatting with some of my participants while the recorder was not on as I was not expecting anything much to happen. However, in a few cases, I realised that the discussions were going in a very interesting direction, and during such moments, I used to follow my instincts about how best to record the observation. If, for example, I realised that turning on the recorder in the middle of the conversation might interrupt the flow, I preferred not to record that situation. Nevertheless, I usually had my diary and pen with me, so I used to take notes as I was observing, or else I used to take some time to reflect on the incident and take detailed notes once I returned to the NGO office space. Otherwise, at the end of each day, I would revisit my diary and would make detailed reflective notes that illustrated my fresh thoughts about the day's work. My field observation and reflective notes were immensely useful to validate my initial impression and thoughts with what the participants said through interviews and discussions.

### 3.6.2 Interviews

As I started negotiating with my research participants for interviews, I realised that many participants related the term 'interview' either with a journalistic TV interview or with a job interview or government survey. To avoid the confusion, I used a few terms in Bangla, for example, *kotha bola* (discussion, conversation), *golpo kora* (chat), *jante chaoa* (to know/learn) instead. That also went well with the way I approached my research participants, where I was more interested in engaging with them in conversations to understand the way they make sense of their lives, as opposed to asking them a fixed set of questions (Silverman, 1993). During the interviews, I mostly followed the 'everyday practices of asking and answering questions' and thus the data were 'the product of the local interactions of the speakers' (Rapley, 2004, p. 16). The conversational approach did not require any 'extraordinary skill', rather it required interactions with participants with the aim of 'understand[ing] their experience, opinion and ideas' about everyday life and the role of violence within it (Rapley, 2004, p. 25). Using participatory and activity-based tools, I conducted 46 semi-structured individual interviews and 13 group interviews with 76 participants, including 39 children, and 37 adults (see Appendix C for the interview guide). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 102) argue that there is no reason for researchers to shy away from individual interviews in ethnographic research, as they 'allow one to generate information that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain otherwise'. Unlike structured

interviews, semi-structured interviews do not need to stick strictly to the set questions and the interview schedule is flexible enough to give a space for a less structured talk (Laws and Mann, 2004).

At the same time, however, often participants preferred to talk alongside their friends or, in some instances, family members, or friends joined in the interviews, so that one-to-one interviews organically turned into group interviews. When I visited Naila's place to interview her, I saw that her mother Shamsun was there, and it was not culturally appropriate to ask the mother to leave the room. Naila, though still legally a child who was 15 at the time I interviewed her, was also a mother of an 18-month-old daughter and was living with her husband in a rented room next to her parents' place. Even though my initial plan was to interview Naila individually, Shamsun's presence gave another dynamic to the interview and both mother and daughter spoke about their experiences of marrying very young (Shamsun at 12 and Naila at 13), becoming mothers at a very early age, and how they responded to their everyday struggles. At one point of the interview, Shamsun left as she had some household chores to do and I continued talking to Naila for some time more, which, I thought, gave Naila space to open up more and share her own perspectives about her life, which she may have been uncomfortable doing in front of her mother. Thus, eventually, I realised that group interviews could also be very effective, especially in the local context where the culture of communication encourages family and friends to engage in discussions about issues of common interest (see Appendix D for a detail list of participants).

I always negotiated the time and place for the interviews with the research participants and, in accordance with the participants' convenience, this varied from their homes or workplace to the NGO drop-in-centre. In the camp, where the doors of the one-room houses tend to remain open the whole day for relatives and neighbours to drop by and where three generations live in the same one-room house, and children usually share the room and bed with their parents, Western conceptions of privacy and confidentiality do not fit with the realities of the social context. In Bangladesh, 'asking for permission may appear unusual...this is not implying that the people do not have a sense of privacy, but that their sense of private space is different from that in other societies' (Honan *et al.*, 2013, p. 389).

The issue of privacy and confidentiality can be exemplified in relation to one individual interview during the very early days of my fieldwork, with 16-year-old Milon at the NGO

drop-in-centre. Halfway through, a boy came inside and sat next to Milon while we were having our conversation. With my 'academic' understanding of ethical principles I realised that this is a clear breach of privacy of Milon but from my knowledge of the local practices I was aware that for that boy it was probably only 'an innocuous curiosity for something new and different' (Honan *et al.*, 2013, p. 390). I felt hesitant thinking that Milon was feeling uncomfortable as he was already in the middle of a conversation so I waited until Milon stopped and then asked him about the boy. Milon told me that Shojib, 14, the boy, is his friend and that it is okay for him to stay while we continue our discussion. From my understanding of the local socio-cultural practices, I knew that it was accepted and acceptable to join in the conversation with friends, or even with strangers. Yet I was too naïve at that time to challenge the ethical procedures that a minority world perspective expected me to follow, so I asked Shojib to leave the room and explained to him that I would talk to him separately afterward. I later realised that I probably made him upset by asking him to leave the room and that I was also disrespectful towards local customary practices, and I violated the notions of hospitality, friendship and the 'social and moral code' of the camp (Honan *et al.*, 2013, p. 390). I was tormented feeling that in the name of protecting the confidentiality of one of my research participants, I hurt another child's feelings. Immediately after I finished my interview with Milon, I talked to Shojib again, explained to him that why I had to ask him to leave the room and said sorry for what I did. That ethical dilemma helped me to rethink the different ethical practices of 'Centre-periphery' (Honan *et al.*, 2013) and taught me to follow my instincts and to be more respectful about local customs and practices.

I used some custom-made hand puppets as props to stimulate discussions with the children in the interviews (see Appendix E for the puppets used). The first plan was guided by my reading of literature where some scholars talk about the advantage of using participatory tools, for example, drawing, role play and puppets during interviews with young children (Brooker, 2001; Laws and Mann, 2004; Parkes, 2010). I contacted a local artist to prepare a set of puppets that portrayed different emotions such as happy, sad, angry, frightened, surprised, and upset. By the time I started my pilot study the puppets were not ready and thus I used a few images to elicit discussions on different emotions. When I started using the puppets during my main study, they created quite a buzz among the children who showed much curiosity and interest in them. I therefore used the puppets to ask them a few questions like 'what do you think the puppet is feeling and why?' Once they started talking about a certain feeling, then

I would ask them if they have ever experienced such feelings, and what they would do if they feel something like that. In certain cases, children easily associated their own feelings or experiences with the puppets, while others preferred to talk objectively about the feelings of the puppets only, while not linking to their own emotions. I wanted to 'follow the interviewee's talk, to follow up on and to work with them and not strictly delimit the talk' by my own predefined agenda (Rapley, 2004, p. 18), so I used the puppets as a guide and only when needed. In my interview with Nishi, for example, I did not feel the need to take the puppets out, as she naturally opened up at the very beginning of the interview. Similarly, I had a very open and engaging discussion with Shefali, and I almost finished the interview without taking the puppets out. By that time, however, Shefali, like a few other children, knew that I had brought a few puppets with me, and she asked me in a jolly tone, 'aren't you taking the *putul* (dolls) out?' Seeing her interest, I took them out and had some discussions about them. On several occasions, some younger children simply played with the hand puppets as dolls and that gave me the opportunity either to play with them or to see them as they engaged in conversations among themselves.

It is not only the voices and the narratives of the children that I documented in this research, as I was also mindful about 'the undomesticated voice, the non-normative voice' – the silences and the avoidances – to gather what the children said as much as what they did not say (Spyrou, 2011, p. 157). During an interview with 11-year-old Shajeda, we sat at the NGO drop-in-centre, where Shajeda sat with the open door behind her back. As Shajeda was talking to me about her intimidating relationships with her mother, brothers, and a few other family members, she recurrently checked the door. I assumed that Shajeda was apprehensive about the fact that someone might enter the room and listen to what she was saying. I asked her whether she was feeling all right, or whether she would prefer to change the position so that she can have an eye at the door. She told me that, 'no, I was just checking casually, I am all right'. I took notes of Shajeda's silences and that helped me to understand more about what she told me as I interviewed her mother and observed her more in the subsequent days (see section 4.2 of Chapter Four and section 5.2 of Chapter Five).

On a different occasion, when I went to interview 15-year-old Diti, I found that her mother Marufa and older brother Dulal were also in the room (I discuss this later in section 6.4 of Chapter Six). In that group interview, Marufa and Dulal took control of the interview while Diti mostly stayed silent. Moreover, before I started the interview

Diti's mother interrogated me about its purpose, possibly because she was concerned that her daughter had married unlawfully nine months earlier – before she reached the legal age of 18 – therefore Marufa wanted to know what I would do with the recordings of the conversation. Both her mother and her brother told me that Diti had been spending time with a boy and that this compelled them to arrange the marriage in order to prevent social shame and maintain respectability. It was obvious that Diti was the least empowered person in that group and during that interview, I found that Marufa and Dulal were responding to most of my questions. I felt helpless in not knowing how best to balance the interview. I wanted Diti to respond to at least some of them, and like Meloni and her colleagues (2015, p. 118), I was also 'chasing for an illusory idea of voice and agency'. However, what I failed to grasp at that moment was 'the unsayable and the silence, the hesitation and the fracture' of Diti's language. It was later, only when I read and reread the transcripts and carefully looked at my field notes again that I realised how and why Diti was unable to express herself in front of her mother and her older brother: that she was silent in talking about issues that have already caused much shame and disgrace to the family. Thus, I realised that silences and hesitations need to be documented as much as their words, as this helped me to dig deeper into the social and structural constraints and realities in which children live in relation to adults (Meloni, Vanthuyne and Rousseau, 2015).

### 3.6.3 Group Discussions

Group discussions are an effective tool and provide 'considerable insight into participant(s)' culture' by promoting discussions among peers on issues of shared interests (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 113). In a group discussion, other than the researcher, the participants are audiences as well, and that creates the platform for the participants to talk and discuss their everyday lives within a group that shares some common interests (Macnaghten and Myers, 2004). I conducted 11 group discussions with 76 participants: four girls' groups (35 girls), four boys' groups (22 boys), one mothers' group (5 women), and two fathers' groups (13 men). Questions were asked in general terms (not referring to individual child) which helped me to gather data on collective experiences and helped me to understand the wider social and cultural influences on their experiences (Fraser *et al.*, 2005). Discussions were held for about 50 to 120 minutes and that allowed enough time for the participants to settle in and warm up before starting discussions. They included several icebreakers and participatory activities, including balloon games, photo-elicitation discussions, and



vignettes (see Appendix F for group discussion guide). All group discussions were audio recorded.

The date, time, and place for group discussions were mostly pre-planned, but some were arranged organically. One morning, for instance, as I reached the camp, I saw Meghla, 10, and we had an informal chat at the NGO drop-in-centre. Eventually, Rima, 12, who lives in the same lane, dropped by, and joined in the conversation. Then Meghla and Rima thought that they would check if their friend Champa, 12, was around and she too joined in the discussion. We eventually had an unplanned group discussion for about an hour. On another day, I set a time with six girls for a group discussion at Champa's house. When I arrived, I found Rima, Champa, and Meghla informed about 10 girls about the meeting. Within a few minutes, a few others joined in and there were 14 girls aged between 10 to 16 years old interested in taking part. It was not possible to run a group discussion with 14 children, and there was not enough space at Champa's house to accommodate 14 people. Seeing their enthusiasm, I did not want to cancel the session, however, so I split that group, and arranged three different sessions in the subsequent days.

The group discussions were insightful in understanding the collective experiences of participants and their relationships with their peers. I used a few photographs to elicit discussions about common phenomena related to children's lives in the camp, such as children at school, children at work, children at home, children with their peers etc. (see Appendix G for the images used in the group discussions). The photographs provided 'insights into children's perspectives' (Cappello, 2005, p. 171) that worked as visual prompts and encouraged children to talk about some common, but otherwise less discussed issues such as their relationship with parents, sexual harassment, marriage and relationships. In the group discussions with the adults, I used a few vignettes that helped to elicit the adults' perspectives on issues like children's education, work, and physical punishment and these vignettes allowed them to express themselves on these topics without necessarily narrowing down the issues to their own experiences. I used a few hypothetical incidents which helped the adults comment and share their experiences (see appendix H for the vignettes used).

### 3.7 Transcriptions and translations

I was mindful about my linguistic positioning in this research with Urdu-speaking Biharis when I am a Bangla speaker (like the majority in Bangladesh). I did consider whether my data collection was in any way impacted by my use of the dominant language, and whether it might affect the relationships between myself and my participants (Cormier, 2018). Before I went to the field, I learned from a few previous studies that even though the Biharis in Bangladesh are commonly labelled as 'Urdu-speakers', they actually speak in a combination of languages – a hotchpotch of Urdu, Hindi, Bangla and Bhojpuri (Rahman and van Schendel, 2003; Redclift, 2016). I also came to know from the members of staff of *Oikotan* that the residents in the camp, particularly the children, are fluent Bangla speakers even though they often speak Urdu with their family and other Urdu-speaker peers.

There was a two-way flow of power in relation to the use of language between the research participants and myself. Some of the research participants have a distinct accent when they speak Bangla, and often they were very much conscious of their own accents. In a group discussion, for example, when Ratri was saying something in Bangla, her peers started giggling among themselves. I asked them why they were giggling, and then they said that they find it funny when Ratri speaks in Bangla. Ratri dropped out from school a few years ago, and thus she does not have to speak in Bangla like her school-going sister or peers. Thus, her friends were making fun of her Bangla accent, and I was conscious of whether that might affect the way she responds to the discussion. Gradually, I found out that when I tried to say something in Hindi/Urdu, then they would usually laugh at my accent and this would break the ice and allay any concerns they had over their own accents. On a different occasion, even when the participants would speak in Urdu among themselves, they would translate that in Bangla for me. I extract an excerpt from my conversation with 15-year-old Tomal and 12-year-old Neel, from the first group discussion I had with a few boys in April 2016 to exemplify this.

Jiniya: how do you feel working as bus helper?

Tomal: I enjoy this.

Jiniya: Why do you work? Is it because you enjoy doing it? Or you have to do it?

Tomal: I enjoy doing this.

Neel: [talks to Tomal in Urdu in a friendly humour] how do you say that you enjoy this? Tell the truth that you do not enjoy this.

Tomal: [witty response to Neel's humour in Urdu] – you may think that doing this work is not good – but I do not think so. I enjoy my work.

Neel: [looking at me interprets their side talk in Bangla] I was telling that we do not enjoy our work – but we do not have any option to do anything else.

Jiniya: [asking Tomal] – do you really think so?

Tomal: I enjoy doing my work – he might feel differently.

I could understand what they said in Hindi/Urdu, and I was moderately comfortable in speaking as well. Later in that group discussion, I tried to use a few words in Urdu e.g. to refer 'true or false', I said in Urdu '*sachcha ya jhuta*', instead of '*shotti naki mithya*' in Bangla. They used to appreciate my use of a few Hindi/Urdu words, and that helped me to engage with the children in a friendlier way.

The linguistic power issue does not only exist in the field, but it is omnipresent when I present my data, as I must translate what the participants said into English. As a non-native English speaker, I feel awkward and uncomfortable in translating their words into English knowing that it may take away the nuances of the expressions – I fear that it may fail to grasp the 'rich description' of what they said (Cormier, 2018, p. 333). Ansell (2001, p. 102) discussed the relationship of the researcher, the researched and the research, and I agree with her when she said that researchers are not able to perform the role of 'neutral conduits for the authentic voice of the marginalised', and that the voices of the researched are 'mediated through the research process and decisions made in the construction of texts'. The power dynamics between the researcher and the researched are even more sensitive in a context when the research participants speak a minority language. Cormier (2018, p. 333) argues, 'when words are spoken in a minority language and then transferred and written in a majority language, this can result in the 'further marginalisation of minority voices'.

After I returned to the UK from my fieldwork in Bangladesh, I spent four months transcribing audio-recorded data into transcripts. As I had collected all my data in Bangla, I transcribed all audio-recorded data in Bangla and analysed them in Bangla as well. That allowed me to become intimate with my data in Bangla, and to spend an

extended period with my data in my dominant language. I only translated the excerpts that I used in this thesis at a later stage when I started writing up the chapters. Scholars argue that the translation of data at a later stage of the research can be used as a way of empowering the minority language (Temple and Young, 2004; Cormier, 2018). When I am representing the research participants' accounts through my writing, however I still feel a tension as I am trying to explain what they said in 'another language, through that language's cultural framework' (Cormier, 2018, p. 332). I made the decision, therefore, to use a few Bangla words in this thesis where there is not any easy equivalent English term, e.g. *maan-shomman* and *noshto* which can be glossed superficially as 'respectability' and 'rotten' but are highly nuanced as the rest of the thesis will discuss (see Appendix I for a glossary).

### 3.8 Data analysis

I started data analysis while I was doing my fieldwork, however, I analysed my data in a more structured way only after finishing the entire fieldwork. While Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue that there is no 'formula or recipe' for analysing ethnographic data, in this research I used thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) which gave me the 'theoretical freedom' to apply a 'flexible and useful research tool' with the hope to generate 'rich and detailed, yet complex account of data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 78).

My relationship with my data and my understanding of it has been an iterative process, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 159) say: 'ideas are used to make sense of data, and data are used to change our ideas'. This reflexive approach of ethnographic research gave me the confidence to be more open and flexible about what children and adults were saying, instead of trying to put their ideas into my pre-defined theoretical categories. As I briefly indicated in the preface, my original research proposal had aimed to explore the risks and resilience of children living in an urban slum in Bangladesh. This interest stemmed from the idea of exploring the protective factors that enabled children's positive coping and resilience. However, as I was doing my fieldwork, I realised that children and adults were not talking about 'protective coping' or 'resilience' for that matter and that resilience was not what I was predominantly seeing in my data. Through their accounts, I gathered that they often expressed their vulnerabilities as much as they revealed their agency in negotiating

their relationships and social spaces related to their everyday lives. Instead of taking the role of an all-knowing adult, who was trying to 'make sense' of the children's narratives, and trying to fit the theoretical framework to these, I think my ethnographic and reflexive approach to this research allowed me to be flexible and open to what participants said.

Each Bangla transcription of a research interview or other encounter was filed into a separate Word document, alongside another in which I transcribed, in English, my hand-written field notes in relation to that data. After transcription, I often reflected on the data and took notes of any interesting aspect that helped me to take the flow of data analysis forward. Transcribing data, reading the transcripts, reflecting on the field notes, and re-reading the texts helped me to familiarise myself with the data and start to look for patterns.

Once all the transcriptions were completed, I started coding using NVivo – a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) – to organise ideas that I considered important and relevant to my research questions (Silver and Lewins, 2014). Silver and Lewins (2014) point out some challenges of new researchers in using CAQDAS for data analysis, where they struggle in trying out both the analytical process and using the software tool at the same time. I did not want to depend solely on NVivo for data analysis so I used NVivo mostly to code my data. I found that coding in software was far more iterative, accessible, and visual than doing it in pen and paper. I did not have any aim to build a theory (inductive) or to test any theory (deductive); therefore, I combined the coding approach where I coded data both inductively and deductively (Silver and Lewins, 2014). I had generated some codes from my reading of literature (e.g. agency, inter-generational cycle of violence), some from key topics of my interview schedule (e.g. school, education, work), and some were generated inductively from data (e.g. spatial risks, respect, social shame, good child and bad child). After finishing coding the entire dataset, I had generated 56 codes and 16 parent codes. At that stage, using NVivo, I transferred all extracts related to one particular code into one document. This way, I was able to read all the coded extracts from the entire dataset. Once that was done, I revisited the entire dataset, revised, and updated the codes with the aim of seeing a pattern across the dataset (see appendix J for the list of codes generated).

After organising all the codes, I started to look for a pattern and to identify themes from the codes. At this stage, along with playing around with my ideas in pen and paper, I used a mind-mapping software that helped me to think through the codes, and gradually to sort, organise, and group different codes into broader themes (Chamberlain, 2015). At this stage, I developed a few overarching themes and a few sub-themes under each of the themes. Having done that, I reviewed the thematic categories, where I regrouped and renamed a few sub-themes, and finally refined the thematic maps (see Figure 3.2 for the thematic map).

Finally, I ended up with three broader themes: a) socio-spatial dynamics of violence, b) violence in relation to experiences of education and work, and c) gendered and generational inequalities. The themes helped me to see children's experiences of everyday violence in these broader landscapes, such as children's experiences of violence in the community, in the institutions, and in relation to their families and relationships.

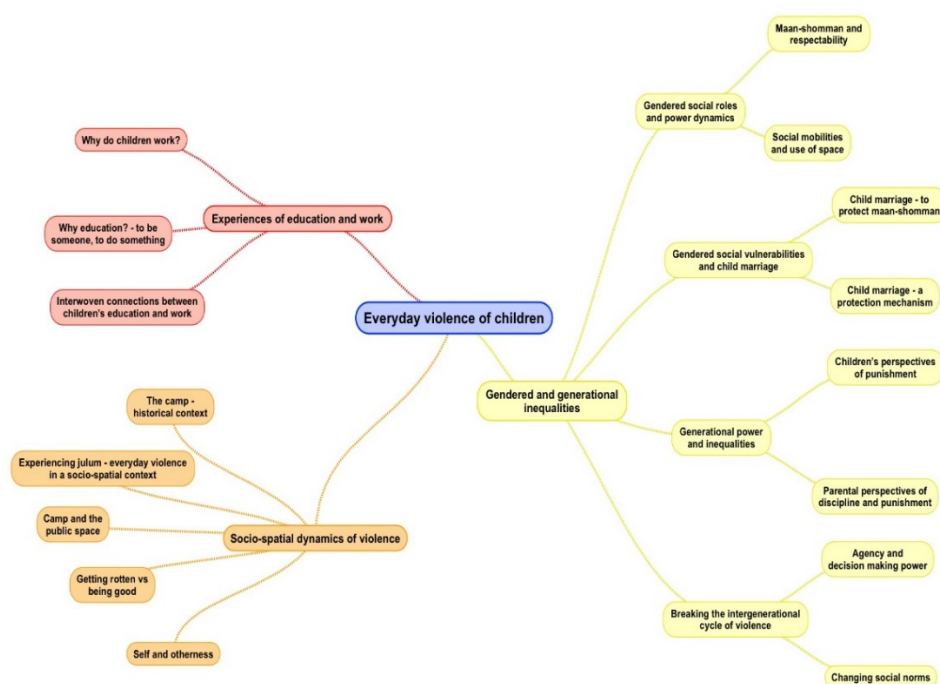


Figure 3.2 Thematic maps

### 3.9 Summary

This chapter explained my ethical and methodological positioning in this research process. Building on the theoretical underpinnings of this research, which I discussed in Chapter One, this chapter has shown the ways that shaped and influenced how I engaged with my research participants while trying to make sense of their experiences of everyday violence in the camp context. The data analysis section illustrated that instead of providing a 'rich description of the data set', I wanted to provide a 'more detailed and nuanced account' of the key themes within the dataset (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83). With this aim, I decided to present my research findings thematically. I wrote up each theme in separate documents, which eventually became three separate findings and analyses chapters (Chapters Four, Five, and Six) which now follow.

## 4 Chapter Four: Socio-spatial dynamics of everyday violence

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how children experience violence in relation to their everyday use of space within the camp and sheds light on the complex ways in which children construct, perform, and negotiate their agency in response to this. I start by interrogating dominant discourses and narratives behind the idea of a 'good child' and 'bad child', and the normative lens through which childhood is understood in this community before relating this to ideas of everyday violence. I present the narratives of the children in order to understand their perspectives on growing up in the camp. I also discuss accounts by their parents and caregivers to compare their views about living in, and raising their children, in the same community. The discussions in this chapter provide an overview of the historical rootedness of violence in this research context and combine these with children's narratives on their contemporary lives.

### 4.2 Becoming 'rotten' vs. being 'good'

Central to the ideas about childhood within the camp are the concepts of '*bhalo*' (good) children, as opposed to '*noshto*' (rotten) or '*kharap*' (bad) children, which reflect the concept of 'rottenness' associated with the camp itself. Heissler (2012, p. 506) illustrates how, in her research on children's migration for work in Bangladesh, notions of honour and shame are central parts of the socialisation process in Bangladesh (see also White, 2012; Ahsan, 2015). She recounts how many parents aspired for their children to become *bhalo manush* (good human beings) and many children concurred with this. Balagopalan (2014, p. 87) found similar aspirations in her research with street children in Kolkata, where children expressed their desires to become '*manush*', which literally means to 'become human': they wanted to fit themselves into the 'hegemonic form of personhood' while 'embracing life as it presented itself to them'. To isolate



themselves from the rottenness of the camp, the participants in my research also expressed their desire to become '*bhalo*' (good) and feared that the 'rotten' environment of the camp might turn them 'rotten' too.



*Figure 4.1 A few women and girls interacting with each other in the camp*

Rodela, 17, for example, expressed her frustration when she finds that her peers and teachers have negative feelings about camp residents [she attends a high school outside the camp]. If there were fights among the girls in her school, she claims, she would always be the first to be blamed as she is a '*camp er meye*' (a girl from the camp). Rodela is hesitant to invite her friends to come over to her home and often she does not even tell others that she lives in the camp. Rodela thinks, the term 'camp' has very negative connotations to many people living outside the camp and, indeed also within the camp. She says:

It hurts me. Why do they say so? Not everyone in a place can ever be the same. There is no such rule that everyone in the camp will be bad only because the camp is bad. There are *kharap* (bad) people in the quarter too. There are *bhalo* (good) people in there as well. But wherever you go, you would only hear about the camp – that camp is a filthy (*joghonyo*) place. The camp is [considered to be] a bad place only because

of a few children. If I go somewhere [outside the camp] then people would say [in surprise], 'oh, how could you be a good girl since you are living in a camp? That place is bad. Camp is the worst place'. (Rodela, 17, individual interview, 21 August 2016)

Shefali, 17, on the other hand, presents a more defiant, if sarcastic, view about the negative attitudes towards the camp:

Those who live outside the camp cannot bear the camp – and I don't see any fault of them in it. All faults are ours only. If we have kept the ambience (*poribesh*) well, if people have behaved decently, and if they have not had so much jealousy and mistrust, then there would not have such disrepute (*bodnaam*) of the camp. If we remain decent and clean then people would get along with us – and if we remain dirty and filthy then nobody would like us. (Shefali, 17, female, individual interview, 8 August 2016)



Figure 4.2 Children spending time at the lanes

The prejudice against the children in the camp is well captured in a quote from Jibon, 50, a primary school teacher in the camp, who is not a Bihari but grew up in the camp neighbourhood. He said:

You surely have noticed, the environment of the camp is rotten, both the girls and the boys are bad [said with a tone of detestation]. You will see that in the camp very young

girls are talking to the boys, holding each other's' hands. If you walk by the camp, you will see that the girls and the boys are chatting with each other sitting in the corners of the narrow lanes. (Jibon 50, male, individual interview, 17 October 2016)

The actions of the girls and boys described by Jibon are not something unique to the children in the camp but because due to living in this environment, they are immediately stigmatised as 'rotten' children.



Figure 4.3 A few boys playing video games (left), boys watching something in a mobile phone

In addition to the labelling and stigmatisation of the camp residents by the people living outside of the camp, there are on-going tensions and debates about who is 'good' and who is 'rotten' by the residents of the camp itself. The following excerpt from my conversation with 11-year-old Shajeda reflects this:

Jiniya: Do you have friends here?

Shajeda: Here? My mum doesn't let me get out of the house.

Jiniya: Why?

Shajeda: No, [she] said, now *dinkal* (time and age) is not good in the camp. If I roam around with anyone then it would bring *bodnaam* (disgrace). I might talk to some boys, and then it would bring *bodnaam* for me. [People would say] 'She [Shajeda] has done this, she has done that'. This is the reason that my mum said I don't need to make friends. [She told me] 'If you don't feel well inside home, then go to your aunts' house [inside the camp]... spend time at their home, but don't make any friend'. This is the reason that I don't talk to anyone.

Jiniya: Do you like this?



Shajeda: Now what else to do even if I don't like this? My mum is the oldest one in the home. I must abide by whatever she says. This is the reason. Whatever my mum says, she surely says for my *bhalo* (wellbeing), she surely doesn't say anything for my *kharap* (bad).

Shajeda, 11, female, individual interview, 1 August 2016

Suraiya, 45, and her family used to live in one of the Bihari camps in village in a northern district in Bangladesh, but a few years ago she, along with her family, moved to this camp in Dhaka in the hope of better economic prospects. Suraiya was critical about the camp from a moralistic perspective as she finds the environment of this urban camp so 'bad' and worries it will turn her children 'bad'. Suraiya compared her experiences of living in the two camps:

The environment of *desh* (village) and camp are very different. I don't see that the environment of this camp is any good. *Bhalo* (good) children will get *noshto* (rotten) in this camp environment... When someone moves into the camp [from outside] then their children get rotten. Badhon [her youngest daughter] has always been a very good child – but from the time we moved into this camp, she is turning into a *noshto* child... she gets along with other children of the camp... she has become very bad now. (Suraiya, 45, female, individual interview, 25 September 2016)



Figure 4.4 Children playing in the camp

Children living in the camp are often labelled as '*camp er chhele-meye*' (camp children) (see following section) – a pejorative category – and this affects the way children are positioned, and also position themselves, within the dominant discourses around

childhood in the camp. Sometimes the children actively tried to position themselves as 'good children', tried to conform to the criteria of 'good child' set by the wider community, further bolstering their claims by being very critical about those who do not conform to these ideals who, they claimed, would further risk the reputation of all the children in the camp. The extracts below, between Mosharrof, 11, Naveed, 14, and Shimanto, 13, illustrate on this prevailing sense of 'self' and 'otherness' among children:

Mosharrof: The *poribesh* (environment) here is not great. All *aaul-faul* boys.

Jiniya: What is *aaul-faul*?

Rahul: It means *kharap* (bad).

Mosharrof: [asks me] don't you know the meaning? They are always like *ure-ghure* (loiter around). We also roam around but...

Naveed: [interrupting Mosharrof] ...they go to different places and do *gaala-gaali* (swearing and bad words)

Mosharrof: They do *gala-gaali*, they do *maara-maari* (hitting) – it doesn't feel good.

Shimanto: We don't do *gala-gaali*. If they hit at some point, then I feel irritated, only then I hit. If they swear then there is no point in swearing back. It will provoke fights. Then I just hit them.

Extracts from a group discussion, boys' group, 19 August 2016

The account of Johnny, 14, shows that his exposure to the 'outer' world enabled him to learn the differences between the 'good' and the 'bad':

When I started school, made a few friends with boys who live outside the camp, I started to realise that the boys in the camp are really *khub kharap* (very bad). The boys from outside the camp are *onek bhalo* (very good/ decent) – they do their prayers (*namaz*)... I haven't made any friend in this camp. The boys here are not good. They don't study, and only do chitter-chatter on the streets. Even young children have mobile phones on their hands; they take cigarettes. That's the reason that I can't get along with them. You can tell looking at them who is good and who is bad, you know, they do *gala-gali* (bad words), they do *mara-mari* (hitting). I don't get out on the street; I mostly stay at home and study. (Johnny, 14, male, individual interview, 26 April 2016)

The gendered experiences of violence often mediate by the age of the child. Many parents expressed their concerns around their younger children's mobility and safety, they also felt that younger children were at lesser risk. As girls in particular reach puberty, however, their risks in relation to where they go, with whom they get along become a matter of much greater communal concern (see also Kabeer, Huq and Mahmud, 2014; Ahsan, 2015; Pells and Morrow, 2018). The community therefore starts keeping an eye on the girls which puts pressure on girls to be constantly conscious about the issues of social shame, prestige and subsequently, issues related to *maan-shomman* (respectability).

*Maan-shomman* is a Bangla word, which can be translated into something like self-respect, prestige, or dignity, which broadly relates to ideas around respectability. I use the Bangla word *maan-shomman* (and sometimes use it interchangeably with *shomman/ izzat*) in this section and afterwards, as appropriate, as the English translation is unable to fully capture the essence of what the participants actually mean by *maan-shomman*.

10-year-old Pia explains:

There is no bar on going outside when we are young. But as we are growing older, they [the adults] won't let us go outside to play. It is correct too – if we, as older children, play in the streets then people would talk badly about us. Whatever we play or do – if we are in the streets [as older children] – then people definitely would talk badly about us. (Pia, 10, female, group discussion, 8 September 2016)

Parul, 40, expressed the fear of losing '*maan-shomman*':

I forbid her [Champa, her 12-year-old daughter] to go anywhere. Why should she? Does she have any work to do outside home? Whatever she needs to do is inside the home. You stay at home and eat, there is a space here [in the lane] to play. But she has a bad habit. She has become *dangor* (grown-up, to refer that she reached puberty). What would others say? [They would say] don't you have anything to do? You are wandering around the street! I feel it very badly. Why would others [get the chance to] talk about you? [I tell her to] stay at home. Neither you will go to any place, nor would anyone get a chance to talk about you. (Parul 40, female, individual interview, 26 September 2016)

Sohani, 28, echoes similar perspectives:

If any boy holds my daughter's hand, then her *maan-shomman* would drop. She won't have her *maan-shomman*. Then why should she go to lose her own *maan-shomman*? Let them [the boys] say whatever they want to say. That would damage their mouths. She should not listen to those. Let them say, and let them realise. (Sohani 28, female, individual interview, 26 October 2016)

To protect them from any sexual harassments in public places, some older girls expressed a desire to cover themselves with *burqa*<sup>23</sup> or *hijab*<sup>24</sup>, which would also signify to their community that they were 'good' girls. Some girls though, such as Rodela, challenge the idea that *burqa* is a symbol of decency. She also noted that many of her friends intentionally wear a *burqa* to go out with boys so that no one can recognise them. She does, however, sometimes wear a *burqa* while going to tuition classes, although she stresses the pragmatism of this: 'I can wear the same burqa every day. That's not a problem. But if I wear dresses, then it becomes too expensive, you know, I can't just wear the same dress every day. I will have to have at least three dresses. It becomes expensive [laughs]. This is the reason that I wear a *burqa*, I don't have to worry about what I am wearing beneath'.

In my discussion with Masum, 13, he gave me a glimpse of his journey from becoming a good to a 'bad' boy. Masum said:

'I learned *gala-gali* (bad words) from this camp. I have not always been as I am today. I was good when I was young. I used to say my prayers. I don't like *gala-gali*. But most of the people use bad words. Those who study at *Madrasas* (Islamic educational institutions) also use bad words – even the *hujur* (teacher at the *Madarasa*) uses bad words. I grew up hearing bad words, and I learned those too. My mum used to say that she would hit me if I swear. But if anyone swears by my mother [at her] then I evidently swear back or strike back'. (Masum, 13, male, individual interview, 8 August 2016)

Many child participants explained that they prefer to be silent, as opposed to raising their voices, in order not to jeopardise the reputation of being a 'good child' that they

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<sup>23</sup> A burqa is an outer garment that many Muslim women wear to cover themselves in public.

<sup>24</sup> A hijab is a head scarf that many Muslim women use to cover their head in public.

have accumulated over the years. The two extracts that I present below explain the reasons behind the choices of silences:

I don't do anything even when I get angry. Why don't I do so? Because one word will beget many words. This is the reason that I don't say anything. I tell them [who start bad words] that, 'you have the mouth to throw bad words – so better you continue to do so'. I rather would let those bad words enter through my one ear and leave through the other. I don't have any need to hear those! I don't have any need to fall into the trap of problems. (Tonima, 13, female, individual interview, 2 August 2016)

I hear many things on my way to and from school. I don't pay any heed to those. I pretend not to hear anything. I don't care. They have the mouth to say those, so let them say so! But I would only hear when I have the need to hear. I will only protest when someone dishonours (*shlilotahani*) me. I am aware of that. But nobody dishonoured me – like nobody hold my hand, or blocked my way, you know, I will only protest when someone does something like that. Otherwise, if I respond to their bad words, then people would suspect that I have relationships with them. They won't try to understand that I am doing all these for my good. This is the reason that I don't listen to any bad words – rather I go on my own. (Nahar, 14, female, group discussion, 7 August 2016)

A few participants said that they prefer to distance themselves from the 'rotteness' of the camp, as well as its 'rotten' residents. The strategy to isolate themselves from their Bihari peers is a way of identifying ways to connect and integrate with mainstream Bangla society (see section 4.3), to establish relations and build connections and, consequently, to accumulate 'symbolic capital' through this process (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The following account of 14-year-old Adi illustrates this:

'I no longer get along with other children from the camp. Now all my friends are from a higher class [outside the camp]. I started to embrace their lifestyles...I like to spend money. So that others have the impression that I come from a decent family. I always want my friends to look at me with admiration... But my parents are really poor. I don't tell my friends that I live in this camp, you know, people in this camp and even my parents are uncultured'. (Adi, 14, male, individual interview, 31 July 2016)

Some of the parents also expressed their preferences to remain *nitol* (clean) and *niribili* (isolated) from their peers within the camp to get away from the stigma of 'rotteness'



which is associated with this place. Sabita, 50, for example, made up her mind that she would arrange her children's marriages to Bangali families, which would allow them to get rid of the stigma they experience due to their ethnic identities. Sabita said, 'if you row a boat from two ends, it can't go to both directions. It only goes towards one direction. I also want to follow in one direction only – only Bangali'.

### 4.3 Experiencing everyday violence within a socio-spatial context

Such ideas about good and bad children do not exist in a vacuum of course but are related to wider notions outside the camp and in Bangali society more generally. In the following section, I elaborate further, how children negotiate such ideas within a framework of everyday violence and how the stigmas and exclusion they experience as camp children add to their ontological as well as communal insecurity.

Shuhash, a 14-year-old boy, is in a classroom with his friends. The teacher comes and asks for the homework. She beats Shuhash as he has not prepared his lessons. The teacher even tells him that if he does not do his lessons tomorrow then she would ask him to stand outside the classroom, under the sun. After school, Shuhash cannot join his friends on the football ground, as he must finish his lessons before he goes to work in the afternoon. He is late for work as he struggled to finish his lessons. At work, the *mohajon* (supervisor) scolds Shuhash for being late to work. At the end of the day, he cut his pay for being late. When Shuhash hands over the money to his mother, she yells at him for bringing less money at home. At night, Shuhash has very disturbed sleep. He wakes up a few times screaming, 'Madam, don't beat me, I will do my lesson', '*Ustad* (Sir – to address the supervisor), I will not be late at work again', 'Ma, forgive me, I will not do this again'. (Extracts from field notes taken on October 2, 2016)

The extract presented above is from my field notes and concerns a drama production that I observed during my fieldwork in the camp (see Figure 4.5). Some of the children in the camp performed the drama as part of the celebration of Children's Rights Week organised by *Oikotan*. The storyline, collectively written by children with the support of some adults in the community, does not relate the experiences of any individual child, but was a composite of experiences which reflected the everyday life experiences of several participants. I noticed there was not much surprise or shock in the responses of audiences to the drama and observed that the issues performed in the drama were nothing extraordinary or unusual in their lives; they were part of children's 'routine,

inescapable, and mundane' experiences of everyday lives (Wells and Montgomery, 2014, p. 1).



Figure 4.5 Children performing a drama in celebration of Children's Rights Week

During my first few days in the field, I saw a level of anxiety and anguish among the children and the adults over the camp environment. Some of the common expressions were, 'the environment of the camp is very bad', 'the camp is not a good place', 'this camp is not a liveable place'. I found that they often associated the present situation of the camp with the legacy of deprivation that Bihari people carry with them since the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 (see Chapter Two section 2.3). Binoy, 42, a father of three children, expressed his frustration and anger as he told me that, from his childhood, he heard many Bangalis address the Urdu-speaking Biharis pejoratively as *mawora*<sup>25</sup> (descendants of Maurya Empire) and *rajakar*<sup>26</sup> (collaborators). The ways the Bihari community is experiencing *julum* (violence) even after four decades of independence from Pakistan make Binoy frustrated.

<sup>25</sup> The term 'Maowra' origins from Maurya Empire. The present-day Bihar was part of the Maurya Empire at the time of ancient India around 300 BC. Now the term 'Maowra' is used abusively by some Bangalis to refer to the 'Non-Bengalis' and 'Urdu-speaking Bihari' people.

<sup>26</sup> The term '*rajakar*' means collaborator and is used describe the 'war criminals' who collaborated with Pakistan during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971.

We are living in this country for long. Our parents-grandparents came here in 1947. They came to this country during the partition of British-India. They [the earlier generation] experienced *julum* at that time. Then again, there was another oppression on them [during the 1971 liberation war]. Still, we are experiencing oppression... We have to go through griefs and sorrows to educate our children. Don't we have the right to see our children walking hand in hand with everyone else in this country? In whose country are we living in? I can't understand actually. We were born Bangladeshi. We have received citizenship after filing the case [in the Supreme Court]. We have voter ID cards... Our main *dushmon* (enemy) is our language. If we could just switch our language [into Bangla] then probably nobody would ever realise that we are Bihari. But, we are following a truthful track – we just want to claim our rights from the government. We are deprived of many things. We are Bangladeshi by birth. This is our motherland – doesn't matter what our language is! (Binoy, 42, individual interview, 15 November 2016)

The *julum* that Binoy refers to is not any physical violence or attack but, denotes the everyday marginalisation and discrimination that he and members of his community have experienced for generations because of their ethnic-linguistic identity and their historical roots. The camp residents had many words to describe acts of violence: *julum* (oppression/violence), *nirjaton* (abuse), *borborota* (brutality), *nirdoyoya* (cruelty), *boishomyo* (discrimination) and *alada/besh-kom* (inequalities in relation to the 'others').

In the context of my research site, the legacy of socio-political deprivation and the denial of citizenship until 2008 have made the Biharis a vulnerable community in the socio-economic context of modern Bangladesh. This legacy of social and spatial deprivation that the Biharis entraps them in a 'continuum of violence' (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004a, p. 1) which triggers individuals and groups to produce and reproduce violence within their contexts.

Some adults claimed that their experiences of discrimination in accessing education, getting a job, and having the right to vote over the past few decades has given rise to a new generation of Urdu-speaking Biharis, who are 'burdens' instead of 'blessings', 'criminal' instead of 'capital' to the country. Arun, 36, considers this as a failure of the Bihari political elites, who often, he claims prioritise their own benefits, as opposed to the well-beings of the camp-based Biharis. At the same time, however, he blames himself and his camp-based peers for becoming bogged down with internal chaos and conflict, without attempting to improve the camp. Arun explained, 'we are making

damage to the country. We are making damage to our children. We are unintentionally damaging our children – [however] we have no other way around’. Arun’s frustration reverberated in Binoy, 42, who saw himself as failure as a father. He said, ‘we [the Biharis] are confused... we are even unable to raise our children properly... I only became a father, and yet, I haven’t been able to do my duties as a father’.

Both children and adults often positioned themselves in contrast to ‘others’, be it the Bihari political elites, the government, other Biharis who live outside the camp in the quarters, or the other Bangladeshis in general. The ‘others’ have education, wealth, culture, such as all the symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1992) that they consider the camp-based Biharis do not have. Even though the basic social services and opportunities (or the lack of them) in the camp are not very different to most of the other slums in Bangladesh (see Chapter One section 1.4), many participants in this research indicated that they feel fatalistic and uniquely trapped by the legacy of vulnerabilities that have been passed down the generations. Many of them assume that life outside the camp is *shundor* (beautiful) and *bhalo* (better) in comparison to the *noshto* (rotten) and *kharap* (bad) life they lead in the camp and many of them drew constant comparisons between their lives and the lives of those outside the camp. While narrating the everyday direness of the camp, many participants often compared themselves with their next-door Bihari neighbourhood, locally known as the ‘quarter’ (see Chapter Two section 2.4), even though most quarter and camp residents are both Biharis. The discussion between Marufa, 46, and her son Dulal, 22, shed some light on this:

Marufa: People in the camp have jealousy! This is a *basti* (slum) – a camp – you know, this is not a ‘quarter’ that people would show courtesy to us [said with a tone of disgust]. People in the *basti* are not good.

Dulal: The difference [between the camp and the quarter] is that when children in the quarter go outside then people would say, they are outside for their studies. Whereas, in the camp, if children were away until late then people would start backbiting saying that they are dating or having an affair with someone.

Extracts from a group interview, 9 August 2016

At one point during my interview with Arun, he asked me rhetorically, ‘what led you to come to this camp to do your research? ... Well, anyway, thank you for this. Even

people from our next-door neighbourhood [the quarter] hate us. They say that everyone in the camp is bad. They consider us as the 'dustbin'. Allah has bestowed you with blessings that you at least came to this camp [to do the study]'.

The accounts of the research participants reflect the legacy of social and spatial deprivation in the Bihari community and its replication across generations. The deep-rooted marginalisation and the lack of social capital (such as education or family support) has led to the Biharis in the camp feeling left behind by their non-Urdu-speaking peers who, they believe, are flourishing with the support of their social networks. Binoy, 42, and his non-Bihari friend Pasha, 40, discussed this:

Pasha: We (Binoy and Pasha) are now doing the same work – *karchupi* work. Suppose, both Binoy and I want to start-up a business. I would easily manage a bank loan, official permission, trade licence, and registration. He [however] will have trouble.

Binoy: Let me explain you. He has *Mama/Chacha*<sup>27</sup> (uncles), so do I. If Pasha asks anything from his *Mama/Chacha*, no one will send him back [empty handed]. But my *Mama/Chacha* do not have such condition [position of power]. See, I am a father. What would I be able to do for my own children? ... We don't have any job. We don't have any property in countryside. But my friend [Pasha] has these. This is the difference!

Extracts from a participant observation, 3 August 2016

Bikrom, a key influential leader of the community, expressed his frustrations at this political helplessness:

We have been cornered after the independence of Bangladesh. We have been labelled as 'anti-Bangali'. We have been deprived of all the benefits for the last 45 years. Now let me tell you if we get our rights if we get the assistance that we need, then we would not remain as a burden to this country. If we don't get the support from the government, then it is natural that we will take the wrong path [drugs and criminal activities]. (Bikrom 70, male, individual interview, 5 October 2016)

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<sup>27</sup> *Mama* is a maternal uncle and *Chacha* is a paternal uncle. In Bangladesh, the term *Mama/Chacha* is often referred to broadly as social connections and networks, where *Mama/Chacha* means anyone in position of power able to work as intermediaries or bestowing nepotism or favouritism.

## 4.4 Spaces, relations, and power: negotiating everyday violence

The narratives of children and their parents presented in this section help to bring out experiences and understanding of violence, and the patterns of violence within the social structures and power dynamics of the camp. The participants' accounts illustrate that the distinction and boundaries between private and public spaces within the camp are not dichotomous, and their mobility between the spaces are fluid and mobile. Furthermore they are mediated by gendered and generational cultural practices (van Blerk, 2005; Morrow, 2006; Wells, 2015; Kabeer, 2018).

### 4.4.1 Everyday violence in the private space – the home

In contrast to a few research studies where the home has been constructed as an idealised and safe place for children to grow up (e.g. Harden, 2000), it is evident from much research that home is a place where children often experience violence as well as a lack of physical space and privacy (e.g. Bartlett, 2018; Holt, 2011). In my research children regularly mentioned this as negatively affecting their relationships and wellbeing.

We are a family of five. Five of us live in one room. It is extremely difficult to adjust though... In almost every family parents, brothers and sisters have to squeeze in their one-room house. You have already seen that the houses in this camp are so tiny. Everyone has to struggle to adjust. This is a big problem. But, [we are living here] only for the financial problems, we don't have money. We can't afford to rent houses outside the camp. (Bokul 18, female, individual interview, 24 April 2016)

Shefali, 17, like many other children, also expressed her frustration about the lack of space inside the home and as a consequence preferred to keep herself busy doing something so that she has some 'excuse' to be out of the home. She described to me how bad she felt on her school's final day when she cried thinking how she would spend her time inside that small home once her exams were finished. Shefali said that home is a place where she does not get any physical or mental space. She told me, 'you have been to our place, now you know what I am talking about. But you went in the morning; you should go now [mid-noon] and only then you would realise how suffocating it is without any window and sunlight'.

Parents mostly perceive their children's use of space from an 'inside/outside' viewpoint. On the one hand, some participants are critical about the protection and wellbeing afforded to children within their private spaces, while, on the other hand, some present an alternative discourse where they mostly externalise the risks, arguing that children have no risks at all at home – only in the camp outside. Jashim, 35, confidently said that children in the camp do not have any *jhuki* (risks) at all – be it inside the home or outside in the lanes in general. A few other men in the group supported him saying that they get worried when they read stories of child abuse in the newspapers while Jashim even expressed his concern over sending his children to school as they risk being beaten by the teachers. Yet, while claiming children had no risks at home, he also rationalised that it is all right for parents to beat their children and refused to see this as a risk or a form of violence (a theme that I explore in more detail in Chapter Six). Furthermore, Jashim's statement contradicted things I had previously observed in the camp. In one incident, I observed Jashim aggressively fighting with his sister with a dagger in one hand and drops of blood on his body while neighbours had to come to drag him out of the site. Others informed me that Jashim and his sister have some disputes over the family property and often become very aggressive to each other over these matters. As abuse and violence are so naturalised and embedded in their everyday lives however it seemed that Jashim may not have even recognised hitting children as violence or seen that children may be at risk within the camp.

Most of the adults however felt that the lack of physical space inside the home was an obstacle for their children's overall wellbeing. Arun, a father, and activist, asked me whether I would allow my son to be out of my house every now and then. Without even waiting for my response Arun said, 'you would tell him when to go out and when to return. But we don't have such 'system' [discipline] here'. Arun continued,

Our home is 10 feet by 10 feet room... We tell our children to get out of the home for random reasons so that other family members get some space inside the home. They eventually become *noshto* (rotten) being outside. And your children [children who live outside the camp] will be back home by a certain time. Children in our camp stay outside the house until late at night. The guardians here are not good [responsible] either. (Arun 36, male, group interview, 10 November 2016)

The distinction between the private space of *ghor* (home) and the public spaces of *bair* (outside, in the lanes in the camp) is blurred within the camp given that there is often no physical boundary between the two (see Chapter Two section 2.4.1). However, given the limited space they have inside their home parents realise that it is not always possible to prevent children from going outside. Rahela 24, a mother of two young girls, expressed her fears about raising a girl in this camp.

My daughter is still very young, yet I do not want to let her go outside. I do not feel safe. I want to keep her in the room as much as possible. But the room is very small though. There is no space to play too. We bought a cycle for her some time back, but I do not let her ride outside. It might happen that *herionchis* (drug addicts) would snatch the cycle away from her to sell it to buy drugs. She is a kid, they can easily fool her with a chocolate and snatch the cycle away. (Rahela, 24, female, individual interview, 28 July 2016)

A few participants discussed the wider impacts of pervasive poverty:

[By the time] you know very well what the situation of the camp is! Our main problem is poverty. Poverty causes everything else. Those who can afford are renting a house outside the camp. There is a *poribesh* (good ambience and environments). They are living in a decent residential area. They get a good education. Everything combines; you know... earnings and education combine everything else. (Mahiuddin 30, male, individual interview, 31 July 2016)

Mahiuddin's insights and experiences into wider structural inequalities demonstrate how social and economic contexts constantly bring other challenges with them. Mahiuddin and his five siblings were born and brought up in the one-room house in the camp where he still lives with his parents and two younger siblings. Mahiuddin, being the oldest son, had to start work very early to support his family. Without any institutional education and formal training, Mahiuddin had to rely on the home-based *karchupi* business, which does not bring enough to feed the whole family. After he got married a few years ago, unlike a traditional Bangali groom, he was hesitant to bring his wife into his house, as they would have to share the one-room house with four other family members. Instead, his wife went to the Middle East to work and they left their only daughter into the care of her maternal grandparents at their village home. In the hope that his wife would return home with some savings from her job, Mahiuddin was looking forward to building or renting a home outside the camp.



#### 4.4.2 Everyday violence in the public space – the camp

The accounts of many children and adults illustrate the ‘climate of fear’ (Rashid, 2004, p. 23) that dominates everyday lives in the camp, caused in part by criminal activities and police harassment, as well as by poverty and discrimination. The narratives of both children and adults reveal a pervasive sense of fear and shame that intersects with gender and generational practices and relationships of power within their everyday lives.

In a group discussion, Nahar, 14, said, ‘I don’t feel safe in this camp. There is an underground business in our next-door house – actually, not only next-door, underground business is across the camp. In the camp, you will easily get to buy *ganja* and *yaba*<sup>28</sup> tablets. On top of that, there are *jhogra-jhati* (quarrels) and *gala-gali* (swearing and bad words)’. The research participants constantly brought up issues related to swearing and drugs as the key negative factors that affect them in relation to their everyday use of space in the camp:

Young children start swearing even before they start uttering the word *Ma* (mum). I feel so bad – but what to do! There are few people who get fun seeing that a baby has said a bad word! But that’s not something good at all! If they had taught the baby alphabets and letters then that would have been something worthwhile! The baby is using bad words and they are getting fun out of it! I probably can teach the baby – but what to do with the grown-ups? It does not look good if I explain the grown-ups being a child myself! Yet I try to explain to them whenever I can. I just pray that nothing like this happens again. The bad words and swearing can only bring loss – not to our camp only, to our country, to the world. (Milon, 16, male, individual interview, 25 April 2016)

Across many interviews and discussions parents expressed their anxieties and fears about the common, if underground, business of drugs and alcohol, which prevents their children from using public spaces with confidence. They feared that their children would become *noshito* (rotten) if they were exposed to such things regularly. Sabiha, 30, told me that she used to feel more relaxed when her son was attending school, as she was surer about his whereabouts. Once her son dropped out of school and started working in a small factory in the camp, Sabiha’s worries escalated. Her son developed more autonomy and was able to make greater use of his time and space outside the

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<sup>28</sup> *Yaba* is an illegal drug sold as small colourful tablets

home, so it became more difficult for Sabiha to keep an eye on him. However, in comparison to the risks children have hanging out in the lanes without employment opportunities, Sabiha, like many other parents, preferred to send her son to work, which gives both security and skills, as well as safety and reassurance for her, a point, which I elaborate further in Chapter Five.

Koli: Generally speaking, our camp is good. But, the only thing that is bad is the *dui nambari byabsha* (underground business of drugs).

Smriti: There is a drug business at this camp. Even we [the adults] don't feel safe going outside. Our children dare to step out of the door often.

Koli: Boys randomly get into *ganja* and cigarettes. Our children are growing up. They will see and they will learn. This is the fear inside us... My children are still very young. But I am scared. I feel scared to let them play with other children outside the home. I always keep my eyes on them; I just keep my eyes on them. If I see him hanging around with other children, I drag him to home. But why I do that? Because the *mahal* (dwelling) is not good, the 'society' is not good; this time is not good. This is the reason that I hold onto them from other children.

Extracts from a group discussion, mothers' group, 16 November 2016

Rozina 40, a mother of three children said:

I only think about how I would raise my children in this environment. This worries me the most. This environment, you know, only a few children in this camp attend school. Most of them work... mostly for the financial problem, also often parents don't realise the importance of education. Most of the children can't even recite the Quran. Parents have their financial problems, but also, they don't have the interest to educate their children. (Rozina, 40, female, individual interview, 7 November 2016)

Nazma's, 32, account, however, presents an alternative view:

How would I know that if the other children are good or bad? That is the reason that I keep my eyes on my sons. I don't let them take the bad path! If I see that my sons are not returning home on time, then I would get the hint that they are going towards bad directions – that they are getting into cigarettes or alcohol. They usually hang out in the lanes around our home. I know that my sons are nearby – I don't have to go to places

to bring them back home [said with a voice of confidence]. (Nazma, 32, female, individual interview, 17 August 2016)

Atkinson-Sheppard (2017b) in her research with street children in Bangladesh showed that adults involved in drugs business take advantage of children's day-to-day poverty and vulnerability by exposing them to drugs, appointing them as couriers or sellers and engaging them in hazardous labour. The participants of my research described a comparable situation, telling me that dealers, sellers, or consumers look for opportunities to exploit children, particularly those who are young and vulnerable. Amjad, 40, articulated that when children roam unsupervised around the camp, they often fall into bad company. Harun, 50, also felt often, in exchange for small amounts of money, young children got involved in carrying or selling drugs without even realising what they are doing, as many drug sellers employ young children to carry drugs to buyers:

Even if you want to buy some drugs, you will get this from any of the children around [he refers to the children who were standing in the street, outside the room]... 'There are young boys who randomly roam around the streets. If you give them 50 takas [50 pence] and ask them to bring (*ganja*), they will give you a *puri* (small file of marijuana). Eventually, there is no doubt, by the time that boy is 15-16 years old, he would fall into *neshar jogot* (the world of drugs). (Harun, 50, male, group discussion, 8 November 2016)

Bikrom, 70, a well-regarded humanitarian among the Biharis, identified two groups in the camp: the 'dons', organised underworld groups leading the drugs business, and the 'poor' victims of dominance and violence (although my observations and the narratives of some participants suggest there is another group in between the two – 'the middlemen' and 'intermediaries'). Bikrom blames the poverty of the community entirely for the drug problem saying 'it is poverty. As soon as a child is born, the parents start wondering when their child would be big enough to bring 10 takas to the family. This is for the economic reason – poverty – as children start learning to walk [grow up] the parents engage them in such work [such as into drugs].'

The prevalence of drugs, as in many other urban slums in Bangladesh, is well recognised by police and law enforcement agencies. The participants discussed their constant fear of police harassment: police as part of their regular patrolling often arrest

men and boys for suspected involvement with drugs. I extract a conversation between Nodi, 14, and Pushpo, 14, below:

Nodi: If the police were more vigilant then there would not have this [drug] business in the camp.

Pushpo: Actually, those who are in the drugs business often bribes police beforehand – so even if the police want to be vigilant that does not work. Police also take their side.

Nodi: Those who have more money they bribe the police more. And police also take advantage of this – suppose they arrest someone today, they will take the bribe, and will release them the next day. Then after a few days, they will arrest him again [for more bribes].

Pushpo: Everyone has *lalosha* (lust) for money.

Nodi: Those who have the money can at least do something [offer bribes].

Pushpo: And just think what happens when they arrest the poor!

Extracts from a group discussion, girls' group, 7 August 2016

Adults also talked about their experiences of police harassments in the camp. Ramjan, 45, narrated his personal experience of returning home late from work, when the police stopped him and claimed that was selling drugs. When Ramjan challenged them, one of the police officers put a small packet inside Ramjan's bag and charged him with possession. Another afternoon, I was talking to Binoy, 42, at a small factory in the camp, where three of his colleagues were threading the beads in the *karchupi* frame. In the middle of our extended conversation, we heard an argument at the door. I paused the recorder, and Binoy walked to the door to see what happened. He came back and told us that two members of the police were walking through the lane as part of their regular patrol, and interrogating Binoy's colleague who was standing at the gate while puffing a cigarette. 'He is young and quiet', said Binoy, 'he couldn't respond [to police] with confidence and tell them that he works in this factory. That led the police to ask him a few more questions. This harassment is part of our daily lives'. The following extracts from a fathers' group also reiterate the risks many residents face due to police harassments in the camp.

Harun: In this camp there are a few people who are involved in drugs – and that's the riskiest thing for children. It is even more dangerous for those who are coming from *bhalo poribar* (decent families). Police can arrest anyone, anytime, they can harass them – that is our main problem. The issue of drugs is the most, the biggest problem in the camp.

Amjad: There are drugs businesses at camp. Law enforcement officers make visits to the camp to raid. They know who are selling drugs, and who are involved in drugs. But, deliberately, they would ask for random persons [to harass them] ...But police actually know who are genuinely involved in drugs, they know their name and everything about them. Police take money from them [those who are involved in drugs] every month.

Extracts from a group discussion, fathers' group, 8 November 2016

Harun described his son's experience of harassment by the police. Some time back, while going to work early in the morning, police halted Harun's son and enquired about his movements. At one point in the argument, they alleged he was a drug seller and forced him to get into the police van. Harun's son phoned him, asking Harun to come to the spot with ten thousand-taka which police asked for from the boy. Harun, as an established chef, has a good reputation in the local community. He used his connections and phoned a locally influential political leader to release his son without further harassment by the police. The experiences of Harun and Binoy indicate that, even within the context of structural vulnerabilities, the possession of social relationships of power, connections, and network have some mitigating power at the complex convergence of poverty, ethnicity, and social space. Yet their experiences also represent their vulnerabilities and reinforce the arguments of Ahmed and Johnson (2014), who in their research on urban safety and poverty in Bangladesh, showed that everyday experiences of violence of the residents in informal settlements are often perpetuated by networks of oppression involving political leaders, law enforcement agencies and local political actors, not just criminals.

Many people in the camp expressed the fear that children, and boys in particular, were at risk from their peer group, might get involved in gangs and would eventually, becoming 'rotten' by engaging in underground activities. On the other hand, many girls, and their parents, expressed their anxieties and fear in relation to abuse and harassment in public space, which risks their *maan-shomman* and future prospects. Jui, 14, is an outspoken and confident girl who spends her days attending schools and after-school tuition classes. She candidly said:

I am progressively growing up – it's not that I am getting any younger. So, I mostly spend my days at home'. She added, 'my mum asked me not to go out, you know, people give bad looks [she refers to sexual harassments/ teasing by young men and boys in the lanes/streets]. But why shouldn't I go out – I do go out, but I go *bhalo bhabe* (with decency] so that no one can give a *kharap* (bad) look to me... if I had the opportunity to move more freely, then I would have the freedom. When someone has freedom then she can be happy! And when someone is happy then no doubt that there won't be any grief or any regret. (Jui, 14, female, individual interview, 27 July 2016)

10-year-old Meghla's account, however, provides a contrasting picture. When I asked her whether she feels safe in running around the camp, either fetching water or getting tea from the local stalls, Meghla said:

If anyone comes to me and say something bad then I will give him a slap, otherwise, I will push him. I will say, 'hey, why did you touch my body? If he forces, then I will just give him a slap... Once someone did something bad to one of my friends, and she didn't do anything. Then I told her if ever anything like this happen to me I will instantly give a slap. (Meghla, 10, female, participant observation, 7 September 2016)

Cultural practices in relation to gender and generation often shape the ways children use and access spaces. In the name of protecting *maan-shomman* (respectability) of girls, many girls reported society controls and comments on the way they use the social spaces.

If I am standing at the lane and talking to someone, and if I am laughing with my friends, my *Nani* (grand-ma) would stand on my back. [She would ask] why are you laughing so much? *Nani* scolds me whenever I get out of the house. She says that 'your legs have become long; I would cut your legs'. Whatever happens, she jumps into the middle, and I don't like that. (Sultana, 16, female, group discussion, 9 October 2016)

Shiuly, on the other hand, conforms to social expectations and lives a quiet life on her own. Now 20, she left school when she was 12 years old. She mostly stays inside the home and keeps herself busy with *karchupi* work, while her two younger school-going sisters have a social life outside the home. Shiuly does not have friends since she left school, and she accepts that it is her fate to live a socially isolated life. Being the oldest one among the siblings, she had to leave school early to allow her young siblings to attend schools, while she worked. She said,

I don't have any friends. Now I feel bad when I see my younger sisters have their friends. But I don't have any. I feel lonely. What should I say? I am feeling like crying right now. I have the strength inside me... My main strength is, I have learned to endure the pain. When I go out, I get strength. I know that when I am outside I must not be *boka* (stupid, dull). I won't be able to survive if I remain *boka*. I must be bold. But it [that realisation] feels heavy. Like a burden. Very heavy. I feel very bad. (Shiuly, 20, female, group discussion, 9 October 2016)

## 4.5 Summary

The findings outlined in this chapter bring out children's complex relationships with the everyday spaces of the camp, the impact of cultural norms and structural realities, and how that influence and shape the way children experience childhood in the camp. Most important is the construction of goodness and rottenness and the ways that rottenness of the camp can influence and turn children themselves rotten. The discussions also shed light on the symbolic power of social relations and social spaces, while reflecting on the ways that influence children's experiences of violence in everyday lives. The narratives of the participants document their everyday experiences of violence in the context of private space of the home and public space of the lanes, as well as within and outside the camp context. The findings also bring out how, within the complex historical, political, and structural milieu of the camp, while many children conform to the way of the world, others find ways to express themselves by negotiating and contesting their agency within the constraints. The narratives in this chapter also raise attention to the issues of aspirations, contested relationships between power and inequalities, which I elaborate in detail in Chapters Five and Six.

## 5 Chapter Five: Everyday violence intertwined with children's work and education

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the experiences and understandings of children and adults around children's work and education. The narratives of the participants bring out the complex interactions between children's education and work and illustrate how everyday violence is interwoven into these contested relationships. The discussions also shed light on the various complex ways children challenge and negotiate agency and relationships of power in relation to gender, generation, and spaces.

### 5.2 Children's work: gender, generational and spatial power dynamics

Children's experiences of work are embedded in cultural practices, expectations, and reciprocity in relation to gender and generational power dynamics. In many interactions with Shomota, 47, and her son Shopno, 11, both individually and together, I witnessed a constant battle between them. Shomota wanted Shopno to focus on his apprenticeship but Shopno was reluctant to do so as he preferred spending time with his friends. During my initial days in the field, I went to Shomota's place and saw that Shomota was washing clothes in one corner of their house, while her eldest daughter was doing *karchupi* in a piece of cloth on the bed. Shopno, her second child, who I had met earlier, was playing with a ball sitting next to his sister. Shomota's youngest son was at school and her husband was at work. Though I did not plan to do an interview with her that day, Shomota started telling me about her family and her children, and how bothered (*otishtho*) she was by Shopno. I felt very uncomfortable by the discussion, especially as Shopno was present in that room. I was concerned about how Shopno would feel listening to his mother saying 'bad' things about him to an 'outsider'. I cut the conversation short by requesting her to give me a time another day where we could have a proper discussion.



A few days later, as part of a group discussion, Shopno informed me that he was working as an 'unpaid' apprentice in a motor workshop, where he was helping the *mohajon* (supervisor) in fixing gas-powered auto-rickshaws [locally known as CNGs]. Along with his work in the motor workshop, Shopno was also attending an NGO-run morning school. Despite this activity, however, Shopno was mocked by his friends. 12-year-old Neel, said, 'Shopno *magna khaate*', meaning that 'Shopno gives his labour free'. Such expressions were designed to be hurtful and make him appear vulnerable and even ridiculous to his friends – both because he works and that he does so free. When I asked the children in the group what they feel about their work, Shopno instantly gave me the firm reply: 'It feels very bad'. He went on to say:

Jiniya: Why does it feel bad?

Shopno: This is the time for us to play, I mean we will work, but we need to play first and only then we can work.

Jiniya: Don't you get to play?

Shopno: No. Whenever I go to play, they will ask me to go to work.

Jiniya: Who asks you to go to work?

Shopno: My mother – Friday is the only day off for me – even if I go to play on Fridays, she will chase me to bring me back home.

Jiniya: She asks you to be at home on Fridays.

Shopno: [She] only asks me to stay at home, to watch TV, and when I watch TV for a bit longer then she hides the remote [TV remote control].

Jiniya: How do you feel then?

Shopno: I feel miserable... and if play with a bat and ball; do you know what did she do the other day? She broke the bat and cut the ball with a knife.

Extracts from a group discussion, boys' group, 26 April 2016

There were distinct differences between Shomota and Shopno about their perspectives of, and expectations from, work, based in part of their respective generational power inequalities. But there were also practical realities and different concerns. Shomota's almost 60-year-old husband sells *agrobati* (firecrackers) in a

distant market, which does not bring him enough money to manage the family of five. Shomota and her daughter do *karchupi* work to support the family even though that too does not bring enough money to rely on. She worries even more about the possible sudden demise of her husband who has had health issues for some years. However, Shomota is not simply enforcing an 'inter-generational' contract (Kabeer, 2000; see also section 1.4.3 of Chapter One) but also trying to ensure that Shopno gets some practical skills, which would help him to become independent as he grows up, even though this makes Shopno feel 'miserable' and 'awful'. She said in a tone of frustration:

Why do I ask him to learn to work? Who would be helped if he develops some skills? Would that be he or I? If he earns money then would I sit idle to live on this money? Would I take his money with me in the graveyard when I die? It doesn't matter if I can rely on his income or not. But he would get married one day, and if he earns then at least that girl [his would-be wife] would get some peace. (Shomota 47, female, individual interview, 14 November 2016)

Unlike many other parents, Shomota does not want her son to make money to feed the family. She, rather, wants him to be independent and be prepared for the future so that he would not have to suffer like his parents. Shomota's yearning for Shopno to become independent contradicts with the traditional notion of generational interdependence and an 'inter-generational contract', where children and parents have a relationship of reciprocity with each other (Kabeer, 2000, p. 463; see also Punch, 2001b, 2005). Her attitude contrasts to others in the camp. Jamuna, 30, a mother of three children, said her children are like 'investments' (*logni*) for the future. Now, as parents, Jamuna and her husband are paying the expenses to raise three children. Jamuna stated, as the children grow older they would help in their family *karchupi* work which would boost up the family's income. Jamuna expects that, though it is expensive to raise three children, their 'sweats would dry away' as their children grow up and pay back all their dues.

Both Shomota and Shopno were unusual in the outlook on relations between the generations. More common were the children who also discussed their obligations in terms of fulfilling inter-generational duties. When I met 13-year-old Masum for the first time, I saw him selling some hand-made clay toys down the lane near the drop-in-centre. A few months later when I interviewed him, he was working in a small *karkhana* to make *thonga* (small paper-made packets). He told me that while he does not enjoy

doing his work, he aspires for a day when he would be able to take over the responsibility of his family:

I want to be *boro* (big/ renowned) through my work. So that I can build a house. When I will work and earn money, then I won't let my parents work anymore. I will only work and earn. I will give my mum 5,000 taka every month. Mum will just cook and eat. I want something like this. (Masum, 13, male, individual interview, 8 August 2016)

Sarfaraz, 13, also took some practical steps to release his mother from her hard work in a garment factory. When I interviewed him, Sarfaraz was a grade four student at an NGO-run afternoon school. He was also working in a fish-market as a labourer very early in the morning. Earlier, he used to work as an apprentice in a motor workshop, for which he was never paid but had to leave this chance of training to become a full-time carer for his baby sister as his mother resumed her work in a garments factory after her maternity leave was over. Sarfaraz stayed at home as a carer for a year, but then asked his mother to leave her job and offered to take over responsibility for the family income. He started working as a day-labourer in a morning fish market which gave him around 100-200 taka every day. He keeps 30-50 taka for himself and gives the rest to his mother. Sarfaraz is now planning to save at least 5000 taka, so that he can rent out a stall in the fish market, or purchase a rickshaw-van to sell fish across the city.

Shimanto, 13, works in a tea stall in the camp that his father owns (see Figure 5.1). In the context of economic need, Shimanto's father must run the tea stall around the clock so that he does not even miss the opportunity to serve a few customers as they return home very late, or those who leave home very early. Shimanto takes the charge of the stall for a few hours in early mornings, which allows his dad to go home to take some rest. Shimanto said:

I like to support my dad in the tea-stall. Abbu (dad) gave me a responsibility. I enjoy this sense of responsibility.... I enjoy being the oldest child. I have younger siblings – all of us should live *milemishe* (harmoniously). As they [parents] say it, I have some responsibilities as the oldest one. I should look after my younger sister. They say all these. I like that then. If parents say these to me, then they surely say this for my *bhalo* (wellbeing). They certainly never say these for anything *kharap* (harmful) of me... He [dad] asked me to oversee the tea-stall; this is for my *bhalo* (wellbeing). I have a responsibility. I enjoy this. (Shimanto 13, male, group discussion, 2 November 2016)



*Figure 5.1 One of the tea-stalls inside the camp*

Even though Shimanto is embracing his growing responsibilities and preparing himself for sharing family responsibility, he does not have any expectations to be paid out of the takings from his father's shop. He said: 'my father raised me. I have no other way than doing something for him'. When I met Shimanto, he was still a registered student in an NGO-run afternoon school but he said he was not attending school regularly. He explained to me that an SSC certificate would not offer any work or prospects for him so neither he nor his parents have any plans to continue his education any further. For Shimanto therefore embracing the opportunity to fulfil his inter-generational responsibility towards his parents was more important than getting an education. Shimanto's sense of importance of inter-generational relationships also links to his gender and his place in the birth order as the oldest son. Mukul, 14, Shimanto's friend, pointed that out to me: 'if he [Shimanto] had an older brother, then his mother would not probably let him [Shimanto] work. She would let him to continue his study [for a few more years]. But he is the only one [only son]. Thus, he has to do all these on his own'.

Gender and birth order often become highly significant when adults distribute generational responsibilities over children. Parents generally expect the oldest sons to take on leadership of the family as they grow older (see Kabeer, 2000; Punch, 2001a). This is also linked to the cultural practices in family households, where a son would bring in his wife in his parent's home after marriage to stay together in the same house, while a daughter would move into their in-law's house after marriage (see section 1.4.2 of Chapter One). The accounts of some of the participants, however, reveal a more

complex reality, where generational relationships do not necessarily follow the cultural ideals and expectations in relation to gender and birth order.

Shiuly, 20, is the second-born child among the five siblings and, as their eldest sister has lived at her in-laws' house since her marriage five years previously, Shiuly has taken over the role of the oldest sibling in the family; unusually however she has a brother who might be expected to take this role on account of his gender. Yet Shiuly informed me that her brother, who is two years younger than her, has turned 'rotten', by falling in with other 'rotten' boys, and mostly spends his time loitering around the camp. Shiuly and her younger sister Shefali told me that their brother is 'only concerned about his own stomach', that if he can manage ten takas, he would buy an egg for himself to have with home-cooked rice. By that, the sisters wanted to emphasise the lack of sense of responsibility in an 18-year-old boy, who, otherwise, should take responsibility for looking after the family. Shiuly asked herself, 'what is the reason that parents expect a son?' Without waiting for any answer, Shiuly explained, 'it is only because when the parents would grow older their sons would look after them. But that is not what is happening to our brother!' The uncertainty of their father's wages, compounded with the recklessness of their brother, led Shiuly to sacrifice her education and engage in *karchupi* work, which is the only source of steady income in the family. Apart from her financial contribution to the family, Shiuly has taken on the emotional labour of the household, even though this caused her some distress.

I keep all the problems myself. I don't share this with my mum or my younger sisters. I listen to my younger sisters as they tell their problems. But I never share anything with my mother as she gets over stressed on every small issue. My mother is already overloaded with lots of family issues – poverty, laid off husband, reckless son, marriageable daughters, and what not! So, I don't usually share our everyday issues with my mother. I take all the stresses to myself and relieve my mother from these additional stresses of us [siblings]. (Shiuly 20, female, group discussion, 9 October 2016)

Shiuly's dual roles to provide both economic and emotional support to the family, while making her overstressed and overburdened, however, created opportunities for her younger sisters to improve their academic prospects and, potentially their wellbeing. Shiuly's life quintessentially shows the fluidity of children's everyday experiences, where they are both the victims of everyday violence and discrimination, while at the same time they use their limited choices and options to allow for the support and

protection of others. Shiuly said, 'how would I bring happiness to my life? My mind wants to go out, to live on my own, and not to take any pressure on my family'. However, Shiuly is aware that to live a life like this, she needs 'both time and money'. She said, 'I don't have either of these two. I don't have any money if I don't work. Again, I don't have any time if I work. Then how would I bring happiness to my life?' Shiuly looked fragile when she asked this question to herself and expressed her discontent that she always has to carry some *chaap* (stress) within her. However, a moment later, she emphasised that she had great *shokti* (inner strength) which drives her to keep going and to handle the hurdles of life with confidence.

Similarly, 11-year-old Shajeda, who is a girl and the third child in the family, with two older brothers who are 18 and 20 years old, is in charge of domestic care and chores while her mother works full-time in a garment factory. Since her father's death a few years back, Shajeda's life has been taken up with looking after her five-year-old sister, cooking, doing the dishes, and 'taking care' of her two older brothers. One day when I was talking to her mother during her lunch break in their house, Shajeda was preparing the meal for the family. She was cooking *daal* (lentils) while chopping *shobji* (vegetables) at the same time, and once the lentils were finished, she cooked the vegetables. Later, during an individual interview with Shajeda, she described a complex scenario to illustrate why she thinks it is important for her to work, while at the same time, how she feels overburdened with it.

When my dad was alive, he was a man (*purush manush*), he used to work outside. Then my mum used to stay at home. My dad earned 1000-2000 taka every day. Why would my mum go out for work then? That time my mum used to stay at home. Now my mum works outside in a garment [factory], she works in 'quality' [English original, refers to the quality control unit in a garment factory]. She has to work there standing the whole day, her legs get swollen by the time she returns home in the evening. So does she need to do even domestic chores once she is back from work? ... I must not only think about myself. I must look after my mum... [In a little while, in that same interview, Shajeda expressed her frustrations] I get angry. But I don't say anything to her [mum]. What should I say? She tells me, 'what is the big job that you are doing? Look at other girls – they are doing even more! They even study and work at the same time'... I do a lot of work, a lot of work! Yet, there is no *naam*<sup>29</sup> (recognition) of it. (Shajeda, 11, female, individual interview, 1 August 2016)

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<sup>29</sup> Literal meaning of *naam* is name, but here it indicates recognition



Figure 5.2 A girl doing dishes (left) and another girl helping her mother in preparing a meal

Children's engagement in household chores frees other family members from their domestic responsibilities and allows them to become economically productive (see also Schildkrout, 2002), although often both children and adults fail to recognise this, or children's other contributions to domestic work, as 'useful and productive labour' (Montgomery, 2009a, p. 151). Almost all the girls (and a few boys) in my research, irrespective of their status as a student or worker, stated that they are engaged in domestic household tasks. While, to many of them, domestic chores involve simply 'giving a hand' to their mothers, or to others, household tasks can be a full-time commitment and responsibility, which they cannot avoid. Every time I met 10-year-old Meghla, she expressed her grief and frustration at the chores she must do every day, including child-care for her two-year-old sister, while her mother Jamuna expressed her indifference to the effort that Meghla puts in:

Meghla is having a better childhood than mine. She only does dishes and laundry, and most of the time she is outside [spending time with her younger siblings]. She finds an excuse to fetch water from the outside, you know, as she can meet her friends then. (Jamuna, 30, female, individual interview, 25 September 2016)

As I illustrated earlier in the chapter, some of the boys did not count Shopno's work seriously as he works for 'free' (*magna khaate*); similarly, Meghla's friends looked

down upon her contribution in *ghorer kaj* (domestic chores) in comparison to the *aay er kaj* (paid work) that they were doing. Meghla refuted this:

How would they [her friends] understand the work that I do? Do they have to bring water? They have taps inside their home. There is no way to fake this task – no matter what I need to bring water home. (Meghla, 10, female, participant observation, 10 August 2016)

Gender clearly plays a central role in identifying roles and responsibilities for children with girls mostly taking on responsibility for domestic work while boys do paid work – a pattern which is repeated throughout the world (Morrow and Boyden, 2018). However often girls have a double burden and in my study I found that girls often have to manage both domestic work and paid work at the same time, while boys can enjoy more ‘free time’ outside their paid work. One day when a few girls were telling me the number of chores they needed to do, I asked them whether their brothers joined them in the chores. Champa, 12, and Rima, 11, laughed out loudly at my question, and Champa said, ‘if there is a girl at home then there is no need for the boys to do chores’. She also referred to a local belief, which says that if men and boys do certain chores at home such as sweeping floors, it brings bad luck to the family. Badhon, 13, expanded on the beliefs behind these gendered roles. She said, ‘if a boy climbs a tree then it is *bhalo* (lovely), but if a girl climbs a tree then her *shomman* (dignity) would go away’. She too believed that if boys do chores it would bring bad luck to the family.

Cultural practices and beliefs in relation to generation and gender often intertwine with the opportunities and constraints for children in relation to the spaces they occupy, which further complicate ideas of everyday violence. In contrast to the view that children’s work is harmful, some participants said that they actually find work to be an opportunity for learning and becoming a good human being, and as a way of preventing them from becoming rotten (see Chapter Four section 4.2). In response to the economic and social precariousness of the camp, a few children such as Mishuk, 13, Mosharrof, 11, and Shimanto, 13 expressed a desire to engage in either apprenticeships or training as opposed to wasting their time doing ‘nothing’ at school:

Mishuk: What should I do sitting idle the whole day? It is rather better that I go to the shop. If I roam around the entire day, if I play the entire day, then I might become *noshto*. Is there any need to drop *maan-shomman* of my parents by wasting time in



playing? The *maan-shomman* of the parents are the *maan-shomman* of their children. Thus, instead of wasting my time in foul things, I prefer to work.

Mosharrof: I enjoy doing work. Instead of wasting my time in between my studies, I spent my time at work.

Jiniya: What do you like the most about your work?

Shimanto: Nothing precise (*emnitei*), what [benefit] is in play only? It is better that instead, we do some work.

Group discussion, boys' group, 19 August 2018

This line of thought was also prevalent among many parents. Sohani, 28, said:

I know it is not the age for him [her 12-year-old son] to work; it is the age for him to play... [But] the environment of the camp worries me... I sent him to a small *karkhana* so that he learns something good, has a good time, and basically, he stays well. He gets the same care in the *karkhana* as he gets at the home [Sohani's acquaintance's *karkhana*]. If I send him to a big *karkhana*, then he would work with ten other children. He might get into tricks and pranks, he might get into hitting, and striking, and he might one day start sniffing glue and get addicted to that. This is the reason that I don't want money. I only want my son to get a *shikkha* (education)... I want him to become a *manush* (good human being) ... This is only what I want. The same *bibek* (conscience) works for my daughter too – I want both of my children to be free from any greed... This is what I learned from my parents, and whatever I learned from my parents, I am spreading that among my children too. (Sohani 28, female, individual interview, 26 October 2016)

Rozina, 40, a mother of three children, expected her youngest daughter to work once she returns from school but when her 14-year-old son was younger, she had to struggle to drag him home from school. Rozina said, 'it wasn't possible to keep him home. He would spend hours playing outside with other boys in the camp. I don't know everyone in the camp. Neither do I know all their families. That was too much of trouble'. Reminiscing about earlier days, Rozina told me that she had to follow her son at the *goli* (lanes) to keep a track on his whereabouts and to oversee with whom he is hanging out. From the 'troubles' she experienced with her son's potentially risky movements in the camp, Rozina believed it was better to keep her 10-year-old daughter busy after she returns home from school with *karchupi* work. She believed

this to be a safer and more productive alternative to random roaming around the camp. This also worked as a form of training and enabled Rozina to prepare her daughter with the knowhow of how to do *karchupi* work and get her ready to contribute to the family's income.

Keeping children safe and occupied at home is seen as the most responsible form of parenting. Backing up Shomota's argument (discussed earlier in this section), Rozina further explained that she was afraid that if she does not engage her son into something productive then he might join in groups of *kharap chele* (bad boys). Both Shomota, and Rozina, along with many other parents, worry that their sons might get arrested by police because of associations with criminal activities such as drugs and alcohol during random raids by the police in the camp. Shomota said:

Police come and take them away. They don't consider who is good and who is bad. We are poor. If they take him [to the police station], then from where we would manage the money [to release him from the police station]? Therefore, we prefer to keep our children at home or work. (Shomota, 47, female, individual interview, 14 November 2016)

Positions on this idea of safety at home are mixed however and while some children and parents prefer to see working as a way of not becoming 'rotten' or just wandering around the camp, other children find the work that is available in the camp humiliating and disgraceful. According to 12-year-old Pias:

I wish I could go abroad... to work and to send money home to my parents, so that they can live well. There is no *bhalo kaj* (respectable/decent work) here in the camp. I don't like to do weaving or *karchupi* work. I like to stay in this camp, but I don't like these types of work (*karchupi*). I don't want to learn those at all. My dad asks me to join him in weaving work, he wants to train me. I don't go there. It hurts to sit the whole day [to weave]. It will be hard work in abroad too, but they will pay [higher]. I don't like to do *karchupi* work from this *chhoto bela* (young age). Some of my friends say that they enjoy working there – some of them work in saree shops, they fold sarees. I don't like those. (Pias, 12, male, individual interview, 18 August 2016)

### 5.3 Children's education: gender, generational and spatial power dynamics

I discussed in the earlier section of this chapter that many children chose work over education as a way of fulfilling inter-generational obligations. Others, however, believed that education would be more valuable in the longer term as it would enable them to become respectable and responsible and therefore better able to fulfil their inter-generational duties in the future. Shojib, 14, explained:

Our parents are giving us an education. We must do many things (*onek kichu*) once we grow up. If I can study then I would be able to do many things once I grow up. But, if we don't have an education, then there is nothing left in life for a person. If people do not study, then they do not have any meaning in their lives. Education is necessary. I have the *ichcha* (desire/ aspiration) that I would look after them once I grow up. I would behave well with them. I would respect them. What is most important is education. Nothing will happen if there is no education. Many children do not want to study even when their parents are creating opportunities for their education. I want to be something good (*bhalo kichu*) for them. (Shojib, 14, male, individual interview, 26 April 2016)

Zaman, 14, dreams to finish his studies to become *kichu ekta* (something). Three of his older brothers are involved with their father in the family weaving artisanship business and by 'becoming something', Zaman means doing 'something' other than what his brothers are doing, something that would bring him respect and prospects, something which can only be achieved through education. He said:

If my brothers have been to school then they would have [material] prospects. If I have an education, I would be able to do something even better [than weaving]. I do not want to learn weaving work. My older brothers are in weaving. I would like to do something different. My older brothers can take the weaving thing forward – if I can do something different [through education] then I can help my brothers to move forward'. (Zaman, 14, male, individual interview, 27 September 2016)

On a similar note, Rodela, 17, expressed her desires to become a *boro manush* (someone big/ reputable), which, she believes is only possible to achieve through education:

It is important to become independent even for a woman. There is a girl in the house next-door. She had a love marriage. Within a short time of their marriage, her husband abandoned her. Now she has a child. She is looking after the child on her own. She does not have any education. If she had education then she would probably manage a good job. She would then be able to take a good care of her daughter too. This made me think that I don't want this to happen to me. I want to finish my studies. I want to be *shabolombi* (self-dependant) I want to become a *boro manush* (someone big). (Rodela, 16, female, individual interview, 21 August 2016)

In line with the discussion on 'rotteness' and 'good' child as discussed in Chapter Four, their dreams of becoming 'something' or doing 'something good' focus on the 'magic' power of education which they believe will transform them into *manush* (good human being) which in turn would provide them with a ticket out of the camp and into mainstream society.

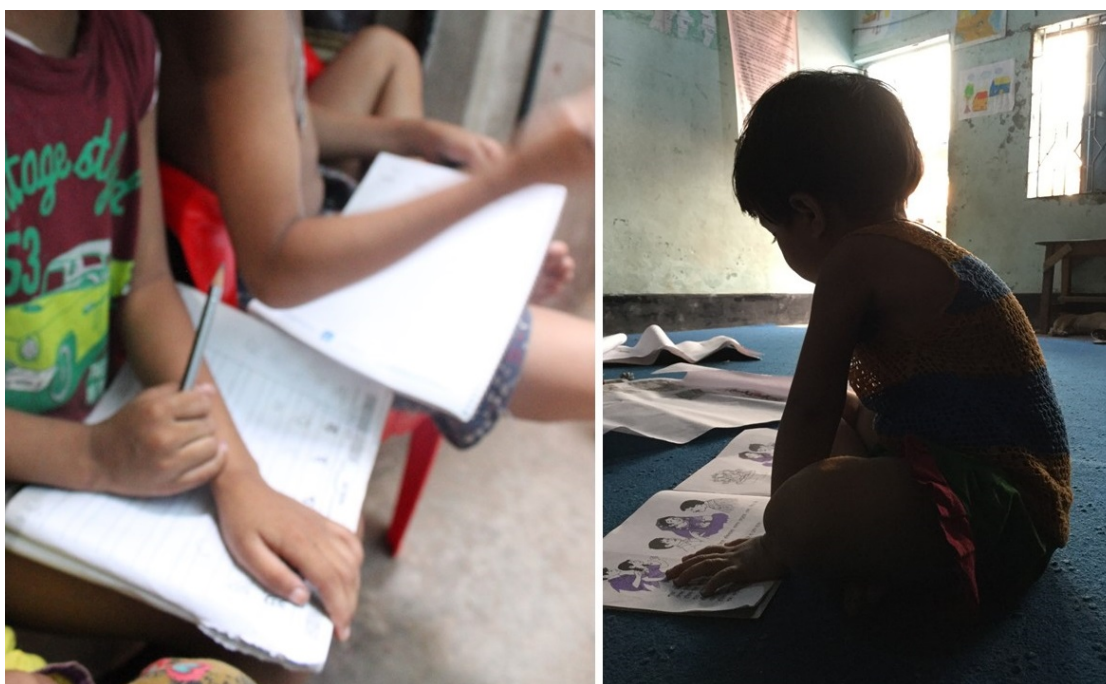


Figure 5.3 Children doing their lessons at their doorsteps (left), a girl studying at the NGO drop-in-centre

Several of the participants associated symbolic power with education, and the prestige and respect that education could bring to their lives. Even though *maan-shomman* (respectability) is not something obvious or traditionally considered as capital, gaining this was a powerful motivating force and showed *maan-shomman* through education could add symbolic power and cultural capital to participants in this research context

(see Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; see also section 1.2 in Chapter One). Alongside the material and everyday value of education, several children expressed their interest in education in terms of its cultural capital and the symbolic power it can bring into their lives. Milon, introduced me to Urmi, 18, and told me that, '*Apu* (sister), you may like to talk to Urmi *Apu*. She is a bit 'different''. I was not sure what Milon meant by 'different' until I met Urmi a few days later. When I met Urmi, she had just finished her HSC examination and was awaiting her results. Among the 78 children that took part in this research, Urmi was the only student studying at HSC level as most of other children had dropped out of education long before.

Urmi was very much aware of the symbolic power she had because of her elevated academic status compared to most of the children in the camp. During my interview with her, she told me that she deliberately isolates herself from the 'others' in the camp as most of the girls of her age are either married or do not study. Urmi emphasised the encouragement of her parents and told me that even though her parents were not educated themselves, they were ready to provide her with any support that she needs to progress in her life. Urmi also spoke of her aspiration to become a banker in the future. However, a few months later the result of the HSC examination was published and she came to know that she had failed. In a subsequent interview with Sabina, 35, Urmi's mother, she told me that Urmi would not be able to continue her education anymore. Sabina said that her husband had been out of work for the last few months, and that they had been going through a monetary crisis for quite a long time. Sabina added that their youngest daughter, 12-year old Zeba, dropped out of school a year ago and they do not have any intention to send her back in near future as Zeba is already working in the family's *karchupi* business. This information was very different from what Urmi had led me to believe earlier. Because of her apparent academic progress, and the symbolic power attached to education, Urmi probably did not want to expose the other side of the reality about her family – the reality that they were no different from 'others' in the camp.

Education, or aspirations for education, could also work as a form of social capital in other ways. Bokul 18, argued that education and the different outlook of her family members help safeguard her against everyday violence in the form of sexual harassment:

Bokul: No one [she meant the boys who usually loiter around the lanes] dares to say anything to me.

Jiniya: What can be the reason for that?

Bokul: We have a *khomota* (power) in this camp. So, no one can say anything to us.

Jiniya: What do you mean by power?

Bokul: It is not like any special [political] power. It is because my aunts and uncles are educated. My uncles never fight with anyone. My aunts are always respectful of others. So nobody has the courage to say *kharap kotha* (bad words, she meant the words used to sexually tease girls) to us for the position of our family in the camp.

Bokul 18, female, individual interview, 24 April 2016



Figure 5.4 Inside a classroom in a school in the camp

The accounts of many parents also support the view that social respect and prestige, and the symbolic power associated with those, influence the way education was understood among adults and children. Jamuna, 30, explained:

I didn't realise all that [the importance of education] before. No, not at all. Now I know what would be good for them and what would make their life better... I also want to educate my child. Why do I want so? [Because] To get along with others in this society, you need something to hold onto. If they get the education then we will have a different level of *dapot* (power) in the community... If she studies, only then I would be able to say to others [with pride] that my daughter attends school. There are so many things that you need to consider, you know [laughs]. When I would meet other mothers, I would be able to tell them that my child also studies! If I meet someone and say that my child doesn't study, then what would they say? If I say that they study, you know, and then there is a different layer of *dapot*. (Jamuna 30, Female, individual interview, 25 September 2016)

Sohani, 28, recognises the symbolic power of education as it can bring social respect and prestige – but the education she mentioned was not necessarily institutional. Sohani emphasises an inter-generational culture of learning and respect for values, which she sees equally important. Sohani said that through decent behaviours and modest attitudes she could earn respect from others. In the absence of any formal education or any material property, Sohani finds this respectable way of leading life an asset. She has learned this lesson from her parents, and she is transferring the same lesson to her children too.

Rozina, 40, also expressed the importance of generational transfer of knowledge as she, from her own life experiences, found it important to be independent. Thus, she conveys to her children that they need to stand on their own feet so that they never become a burden to others. Even though she considers poverty as the main reason that affects whether or not children go to school, she understands that parents often do not see why education is important for their children. Rozina was critical of those parents who do not give priority to their children's education and concerned themselves about material stuff. Rozina considers her children as her *shompod* (property) and believes that spending on children's education is more an investment than spending on material stuff. She explained,

I am *murkho* (illiterate). But I want that my daughter gets her education properly. I am struggling so much! I can see the value of education now. If I had an education, then I could have a job. I want that my daughter gets a good education. If there were any *bipod* (danger) then she would be able to manage her work and family... If I can't buy a fridge today, I can buy it tomorrow. But if my children become *omanush* (rascal,

scoundrel) as opposed to *manush* (good human being) then would I be able to educate them ever? If I have torn clothes, I let them be like this. If Allah wants, I will wear nice clothes one day. But if my children get *noshto* (rotten), then I won't be able to turn them into *bhalo* (good) again. Doesn't matter what happens to my house – if I can't mend it today, I would do it tomorrow. Let the children become *manush* (good human being) first. (Rozina, 40, female, individual interview, 7 November 2016)

The socio-spatial context of the camp strongly links to the inter-generational and gender relationships of power in relation to children's experiences of education. In section 4.2 of Chapter Four, I discussed how 14-year-old Adi, along with a few other children, tried to conform to communal constructs about the 'good child'. Adi socially distanced himself from many of his peers through the symbolic power of education and culture that he is accumulating from his networks with his peers in the mainstream Bangladeshi society and believed this would differentiate him from others in the camp. Adi believes that if he does well academically, or behaves nicely with others, then others will appreciate him. Intentionally though, he only behaves well with those with whom he wants to impress. With others, who he considers are not 'educated' or 'cultured', he raises his voices and acts disrespectfully. Adi laughed as he revealed his strategy to me, 'I shout at them, yell at them, you know, I do a bit of *beyadobi* (disobedience) with them'. By his deliberate performance of disobedience, Adi sets himself apart from most of the children in the camp. As a way of showing his nonconformity to his parents' authority, Adi told me that he does not talk to his parents about his academic progress or plans. He said, 'they always remain tense about my studies and my future. I know that I am heading towards betterment. But I don't talk to them about this. I mean, they are, what should I say, they are sort of 'uncultured' type. You can only explain to those who come from an 'educated background', but they do only *chillachilli* (chaos and uproar). They have chaos for everything'.

Elsewhere, Purnima, 16, said she considers herself different from many of her peers because of the culture of education in her family and the social connections that she keeps with her peers outside the camp.

Purnima: I study, I see the world outside the camp. I get myself ready according to that. I keep a life like the one outside the camp.

Jiniya: What is life like outside the camp?



Purnima: The environment outside the camp is quiet. There is no chaos. Absolute silence. And the environment in the camp is somewhat strange! Outside the camp, there is no chaos, too quiet. I like this outside the camp – it makes my mind fresher.

Jiniya: You said that you have friends at school who live outside the camp. Do they visit you?

Purnima: Oh no, never!

Jiniya: Why not?

Purnima: I don't bring them home. The environment [of the camp] is somewhat strange! I don't feel good to bring my friends here in such an environment.

Extracts from a group interview, 22 August 2016

Ansell (2017) argued that children's experience of schooling is strongly influenced and shaped by the way they construct their identities. She claims that often school-going children 'see themselves differently and have different expectations of their future lives compared with those who have not attended school' (Ansell, 2002, 2017, p. 337). This quote from Purnima supports Ansell's argument, as Purnima positions herself in contrast to her peers in the camp, and she aspires to embrace the lifestyle of her school-going peers who live outside the camp. It also illustrates how Purnima constructs an idyllic image of the world outside the camp, which she considers quiet and silent as opposed to the everyday chaos and mayhem of the camp (see section 4.3 of Chapter Four).

In a group discussion with fathers, Harun, 50, a father of three sons and a daughter, explained how his beliefs about education had changed. He said, 'it was always on my mind that I would never send my daughter to school. It was in the depth of my beliefs'. He previously believed that the role of the girls to give care and support to their parents until they got married and moved away. This belief was further reinforced because, as a cook, Harun had visited different places, including many schools, for catering purposes. His observations of the ways girls and boys interacted with each other gave him the impression that if he sends his daughter to school then her *maan-shomman* might easily be threatened and wasted. However, a few years later, Harun changed his mind and justified this by recourse to his standing in the community. He said, 'my wife and a few others convinced me saying that if she does not have any [academic] certificate then it would be difficult to arrange a good marriage for her in the future'.

Therefore, for Harun and his wife, an academic certificate is a form of social prestige and a prerequisite to aspire for better *shombondho* (relationships through marriage). Harun has influence in the community and the community members respect his views. With growing NGO interventions and awareness raising about the importance of education in the community, Harun felt he might lose prestige and respect if he does not send his own daughter to school. This view of education as a way of ensuring better marriage prospects is reinforced by other parents such as Hamida, 45, who considers that her 25-year-old daughter Rini is now incompatible in the 'marriage market' because she did not have any formal schooling. Hamida said that whenever any marriage proposal comes for Rini, the groom's family do not show any further interest in her, partly, Hamida claims, because their family is extremely poor and would not be able to offer a handsome dowry, and also because Rini has never been to school which, in the present climate, is considered to add to the unsuitability of a modern woman.

Even though a few participants specified the importance of education during the arrangement of marriages, the prospect of education drops once a girl gets married. Naila, 15, was married when she was 12 and became a mother at 14. Naila said that, while sometimes she wants to go back to school, she would not do so considering the possible contempt of her peers and her teachers. She said that wherever she goes people ridicule her for being a mother at such a young age. Naila said, 'they say, 'what have you done? You could have studied for a few more years [before getting married]! [Naila copied their tone of mockery] I feel ashamed. My husband anyway wants me to get back to studies. He does not have any inhibition (*mana*) to anything'. Naila said that when rich people get married they do not have any restrictions on continuing their education. However, as the environment of the camp is not good, she said, 'people shame a girl if, after getting married or being a mother, she wants to go back to school or do some work. They say, 'surely her husband does not have enough money and thus she is out of the house to work'.

#### 5.4 Interwoven connections between children's education and work

Empirical research has established that the relationship between children's work and education need not be mutually conflicting (Morrow and Vennam, 2009; Bourdillon, Levison, Myers and White, 2010; Ofosu-Kusi and Mizen, 2012; Morrow, 2013; Ansell,

2015; Morrow, 2017; Morrow and Boyden, 2018; Pells and Morrow, 2018). Indeed the findings of my research point to a broad range of views on the purposes, influences and impacts of both education and work in children's everyday lives. The narratives of both children and adults presented in this section shed more light onto these complex, interwoven relationships, and how they influence opportunities and/or constraints for children in the context of the everyday precariousness in the camp.

The connections between social pressure and prestige in relation to education have changed over the years but at that time I was doing research, many parents in the camp needed their children's income and engaged their children in work, regardless of their recognition of the importance of education, making it a constant challenge for children to balance work and school. In my discussion with Probhat, 40, a member of the committee which works for the welfare of the camp, he informed me that over the last few years more children than ever are attending schools as there is more NGO support for the education of Bihari children. He felt that, parents have become more supportive of their children's education recently even though he has seen that many children drop out of school after finishing primary education. Probhat's narrative depicts a nuanced reality: there is a growing recognition about the importance of education but there are also economic hardships that make it difficult for parents to continue the education of their children. He said:

Now let's say, the boy who attends school and the one who has never been to school – both of them gather together in this same place at the end of the day. Thus, I do not know how to [positively] shift the mind-set of the children here. I do not see any way that the mind-set of that [school-going] boy would improve. Yes, the only way one child's mind-set might improve is that child's determination (*ichcha shokti*). Only if the child has the desire that 'I am studying now, and I won't live in this environment [in future]'. Or it also depends on the parents and guardians if they think 'I would provide for the education of my children. I will not live in this place [forever]. It all depends on the personal will and the money. (Probhat 40, male, individual interview, 5 October 2016)

Probhat sees education as the prerequisite to ensuring a better environment in the camp, which is more supportive and protective of children. However, as some of the viewpoints presented earlier in the chapter illustrate, unless the camp turns into a safer place, ensuring education for all children is not possible. Instead of drawing attention to any structural inequalities in the camp, or proposing any changes through

community support however, Probhat holds the individuals and the families responsible and believed that those who have strong aspirations to move forward can only do so by isolating themselves from the ‘uneducated others’ in the camp.

Bikrom, 70, another influential political leader among the Biharis had similar views and told that only *shikkha* (education) and *shothik netritwo* (proper leadership) could bring about a change in the conditions of the Biharis living in the camp. Bikrom added that inspirational leadership might enable the camp community to transform from ‘uneducated others’ into an ‘educated community’ yet could not specify what this might look like. Yet the expectations that education can reduce social inequalities are often a fallacy, which can be ‘illusive’ and ‘misleading’ (Ansell, 2017, p. 338). In a group discussion, Arun 36, explained that, where everyday lives are entangled with poverty and inequality, and resources are distributed inequitably, pursuing individual aspirations for education is like ‘running after a mirage’ (*morchikar pichone chhuta*). Even though education brings cultural capital and augments symbolic power to some, others recognise that education does not necessarily give access to the ever-competitive job market.

The children’s narratives illustrate the multiple reasons that led them to drop out of their studies. Ratri, 16, left school a few years back, even though her parents always wanted her to continue. She said, ‘now look, if I can’t do well in the class, then what’s the benefit of wasting money on me? I can only have a [better] future if I study well, isn’t it? Thus, I left school and asked my mother to give me chores – I would cook rice and curry.’ Thus, she left school, as she was unable to see any prospect in the way she was pursuing an education at that time. However, Ratri, said she has an on-going dispute with her younger sister, Nodi, 14, who is studying at grade 9. She complained that Nodi does not contribute to any household tasks as she is always occupied with her studies. Ratri said, ‘only studies would never work. Shouldn’t she learn household tasks as well? Won’t she get married one day? Who would do the chores then? Would I go with her to her in-laws’ place to do the chores for her?’ Even though both Ratri and Nodi were discussing this in a friendly tone, Ratri emphasised the importance of mastering practical life skills and domestic skills, which can never be provided by academic certificates only.

Categorising children’s work as ‘good/safe’ or ‘bad/harmful’ and labelling certain types of work as permitted and others as prohibited rarely works in practice not least because

beliefs about what is safe and harmful are not dichotomous and meanings deviate across contexts (Bourdillon, Levison, Myers and White, 2010, p. 5). It is thus argued that children's work can be both harmful and/or beneficial depending on the contexts (Morrow and Boyden, 2018). Thus, when a 10-year-old cuts metal in a lathe workshop or joins metal using electricity in a welding workshop, or a 12-year-old connects two electrical wires together to spur electricity every time she needs to run the stove at home to cook, these activities might be considered as unsafe or harmful to many, although some children who are involved in these activities, and their parents, do not consider them so.

Tomal, 15, was working as a bus helper in the hope that one day he would be able to be a bus driver. In Bangladesh bus helpers work as 'third eyes' of bus drivers, for instance, as traffic signallers to the drivers, helping them to navigate the chaotic traffic by continuously giving instructions, either in loud voices or by banging the body of the buses. In the absence of proper training schools for aspiring bus drivers in Bangladesh, many young people start working as helpers in motor workshops, and then continue to become bus helpers. Once they master the 'rules of the game' on the road they start riding the bus themselves, and eventually, some become bus drivers. In section 3.7 of Chapter Three, I referred to an excerpt from a group discussion where, in response to his friend Neel, 12, Tomal said, 'you may think that doing this work [bus driving] is not good – but I do not think so. I enjoy my work'. Bearing in mind that the work of a bus helper is 'unsafe', I asked Tomal whether he feels unsafe or not. Tomal said, 'we all must die one day. So why should I have any fear?' He even showed me a wound on his leg, which he got from an accident when a motorbike crashed into the bus while he was standing on the footstep of the bus door. Even though Tomal acknowledged the practical threats that his friends raised, his aspiration to become a bus driver supersedes all the fears and motivates him to keep going.

The following conversations depict a complex understanding of relation to education and work:

Jiniya: Do you go to school?

Masum: No, I have never been to school. I used to make light [light bulbs]. I used to work in a factory – to make light. I used to light fire to heat bulbs.

Jiniya: Was it frightening?

Masum: Nah! [Expressed strongly] Sometimes my hands used to get burned with fire [said casually]... Now I work in *thonga* (paper packets) factory. I don't like going to work. Go to work, make *thonga*! I don't like this anymore! ... I used to enjoy going to work when I was *chhoto* (young). Then one day I ran away from work.

Jiniya: Why did you run away?

Masum: One of my friends said, 'let's go to the play field'. Then we went. Then my *Nana* (granddad) saw me, he scolded me a lot, and dragged me back home. My *Nana* put shackles on my legs [laughs]. Then I had to go back to work. There is no escape from it. Then I started making *thonga*. I don't like to go to work, I like to play. But I like it when I get paid.

Jiniya: Then what would you like to do?

Masum: [he imagines an ideal situation] 'I will go to work. When my friends will come then we will get to play. I will work in-between [working and playing]. I will go out if I want'. But *mohajon* (supervisor at work) would not allow to go out – he would say, 'you get a day off on Friday, you can't go out now'... Now I think it would have been better if I would only study and then I wouldn't have to work. [Imagines another situation] 'I will go to school at 10 in the morning, will come back at 3, and will go to a coaching centre at 4 in the afternoon'. I don't have any wish to work anymore. I have had enough of work! I have worked in almost all the places other than a saloon – I made light [bulbs], I am making *thonga*, I have learned welding works, I have been to a garage [motor workshop]. I have had enough of work! Now I think [wish], [imagines again] 'I will go [to work] one day, and then I won't go for the following two days. If *mohajon* scolds, I will go for two days, and I will not go for the following three days!' This is what I like. (Masum, 13, male, individual interview, 8 August 2016)

Shajeda's accounts (see section 5.2 of this chapter) also show how complex the realities of combining education and work remain for children:

Jiniya: How do you feel that you haven't returned back to school [since your dad's sudden death]?

Shajeda: If my mum had the ability, she surely would have readmitted me to school. There is no *labh* (benefit/ prospect) in giving her a pressure. Is there any benefit? She is alone. How far can she manage on her own? My brothers are not working now, they are learning [as apprentices in motor workshops]. If my brothers have had jobs, then I could have told my mum to re-register me in a school. I am not telling her now. Even then, my mum said that she will register me into school.

Jiniya: What do you want to do now? Do you want to study or learn some work?

Shajeda: Yeah, I want to study now. My mum said that she would buy me a sewing machine. There is one in my aunt's house. She [her mum] asked me to learn to sew at home, and also to study. I will be able to earn some money if I learn sewing.

Shajeda, 11, female, individual interview, 1 August 2016

As I mentioned earlier, in my discussion with Probhat, he drew a divisive line between those who are *shikkhito* (educated) and those who are *murkho* (illiterate). Placing an emphasis on the importance of formal institutional education, Probhat explained that those who are illiterate have less symbolic power and cultural capital in the society, therefore, their voices are rarely heard and hardly counted. He said, 'there are many differences in the way an educated person and an illiterate person speak. We were not able to achieve an education. So, there would be a significant difference in whatever we say and what an educated and eligible person says!' Thus, the latent aspiration that many school-drop outs have about returning to school might be realised in the context of their everyday violence where they have the desire to be counted and to be heard.

The findings of this research posit that children aspire to education – to achieve respectability, and economic prospects – however, this desire is not always possible within their environment and, in reality, children often negotiate and compromise these aspirations. There is an increased awareness of the importance of education among both parents and children, yet parents have to raise their children with limited resources that increase the pressure on everyone. Rodela feels pressurised as her mother expects her to 'do it all':

'Often I cry. I need to attend school, do homework, then do domestic chores and *karchupi* work – I can't. If I can't then my mother tells me off. If I sleep more [as she gets tired] then she wakes me up. She doesn't even let me sleep more. She only yells at me. I feel very bad then'... 'My mother asks me to continue studies and scolds me if I score low. She asks me to have good marks, to have a good result, to do domestic chores, to do *karchupi* work [voice faints]. I can't do it all. Too many responsibilities! Too much!' (Rodela, 17, female, individual interview, 21 August 2016)

When I first met Shefali, 17, she told me that, 'I want to do a job in an NGO. I have the dream that I will go to work every morning, and in the evening, I will return home with some food and snacks for the family'. Given that her family would not be able to afford further education for her, she knew that only an SSC degree would not be enough to get her a job that she aspires for in life. She therefore got herself into a six-months tailoring training to prepare herself for quick entry into the job market. A few months later, her SSC result came out and she came to know that she was not successful. That shattered her aspirations as she realised that without a 'certificate' she would not be able to get a reasonable job even in a garment factory. By the time I finished my fieldwork, Shefali told me that she would retake her SSC exam, but this was eventually not possible because of her father's sudden death in an accident.

## 5.5 Summary

The findings presented in this chapter provide a diverse range of insights into the perspectives of children and adults on education and work and its influence in shaping their experiences of everyday violence. Their viewpoints reveal how inter-generational relationships of reciprocity, cultural practices, and expectations in relation to gender, combined with sibling composition and birth order, play a significant role in relation to children's engagement into education and work. Many children and their parents appreciated the growing value of education and its related symbolic power, which is often embedded in the communal construction of 'good child' and 'good space'. As a way to socially distance themselves from the construct of the rottenness of the place, therefore, children and adults aspire to merge into the mainstream society by taking on the path of education and rejecting the artisan work that is available in the camp. However, children's narratives also exemplify their ambivalence about their aspirations, knowing that they may not turn into reality and being clear-sighted about their marginal position in the camp and in wider society. Overall, this chapter brings out the paradoxes and ambiguities around education and work. The accounts of both adults and children draw on the fact that the push factors for children's work are manifold and complex and therefore, simplistic binaries between work/labour and harmful/beneficial often do not play out in practice. On the other hand, the narratives of children and parents also question the uncritical assumption that work is harmful to children and that education is always positive and can overcome social and structural inequalities to break the cycle of everyday violence and poverty. In turn these discussions raise the question as to whether school is the only place to learn, whether



children can also learn from their work, or whether it is important to embrace a holistic approach where children's education and work can be combined for children to learn from their productive work (Bourdillon, Levison, Myers and White, 2010; Bourdillon and Boyden, 2014; Bourdillon, 2019). Thus, the findings reflect on the importance of exploring the interwoven relationship between children's work and education, and of understanding the contexts which compel and influence children to work.

## 6 Chapter Six: Everyday violence at the intersection of gender and generational power and inequalities

### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline children's experiences of everyday violence that are embedded in everyday practices of power and inequalities in relation to gender and generation. This final analytical chapter builds on the previous explorations of children's experiences of everyday violence intertwined with the relational power dynamics in spaces, and in their experiences of education and work although, as I discussed, these experiences are also impacted by relationship of power hierarchies concerning generation and gender. This chapter will bring these into focus by looking at two, more overt types of everyday violence: physical punishment and child marriage.

### 6.2 Generational power and physical punishment

The everyday life experiences of children are embedded in the unequal relationships of power between children and adults, where children's experiences are often mediated by their negotiations of agency related to the power in spaces, social structures and social relationships (Alanen and Mayall, 2001; Punch, 2005; Ennew, 2008; Mayall, 2008; Spyrou, 2018; Abebe, 2019) (see section 1.3.2 of Chapter One). As this thesis has consistently argued, violence takes many forms but one of the most visible and overt is that done in the name of discipline and socialisation. The term physical violence is a broad term used by academics and practitioners to include physical and corporal punishments as well as humiliation and violent forms of discipline – although it is not often understood in this way by the people in the camp, as I will go on to discuss. However, it is important to note the role played by bad language and shouting in creating a culture of everyday violence in the camp. The use of bad language and swearing were rarely discussed as punishment by my research participants, however, its absence or presence was clearly an important issue for them and a marker of good/rotten children and good/rotten parenting.

As mentioned in section 1.4.3 of Chapter One that adult-child relationships in Bangladesh are embedded in hierarchical relationships of power, through which adults validate their exercise of power over children, while children also largely acquiesce and even support adults' authority (Kabeer, 2000; White, 2002a; Kabeer and Mahmud, 2009; Ahsan, 2015). Over a decade ago, in 2005, at a meeting of the South Asia Forum, held as a follow-up to the regional consultation of the UN study on the violence against children, the government of Bangladesh expressed its commitment to take steps to prohibit corporal punishment in all settings, including at home, in care institutions and in schools (Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children, 2018). Later, in 2011, a Supreme Court ruling was forwarded to schools in Bangladesh which outlawed corporal punishment in school settings (Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children, 2018). This has not, yet, been confirmed through legislation. The Children Act, 2013, does not specifically mention physical punishment against children, although, under a general clause (number 70), it addresses issues of child protection by forbidding any ill-treatment, including, any forms of hitting, violence, neglect, and abandonment (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2013). Such legislation has had little impact on the lives of children in the camp, however, and physical punishment remained a constant feature of children's everyday lives.

The role of everyday violence in the shape of discipline in the camp was discussed explicitly by two of my informants Bablu, 10, and Shurjo, 7, who shed light on the cultural norms regarding social relationships between older and younger people:

Bablu: 'Yes, they [my parents] hit me. Why won't they [he says with stress in his tone]? They have the *odhikar* (right) to hit our bodies. As grown-ups, they surely can hit us.

Shurjo: They are our parents. Why won't they hit us?

Bablu: [Suppose] we are taking a wrong path. Ma beats me to discipline me. She says, 'you should take the right path. If you take this [right] path, then it will be for your good. If you take that [wrong] path, then it will be bad for you'. This is what we have learned. Nothing works without a beating up. If I try to explain [to the other person], then it won't work. Now you see, here [among the three other boys in that group] I am the oldest. Would it be a problem if I slap him [Bablu refers to Shurjo]? There is no 'fault' [he says that in a self-assuring tone]. Now they [parents] hit me, they as adults can hit me. It doesn't matter at all [said with confidence].

Bablu's exercise of his authority shows how violence becomes legitimised (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004a), and how older children use violence towards those who are younger as a way of displaying their increased symbolic power, which they have accrued with age. This is also something that Spyrou (2018, p. 127) has discussed in his work with Greek Cypriot children as an example of the ways in which children's exercise of agency can be problematic when it is used to reproduce structural inequalities (see section 1.3.2 of Chapter One).

Yet parental use of violence in the form of physical discipline is widely supported and seen as legitimate by both parents and children. The following extract also reflects children's views on this:

Shimanto: Parents are *boro* (grown-ups). We are *chhoto* (young). We remain *nichu* (low) with them.

Jiniya: What is the reason for doing that?

Shimanto: We must be afraid of our parents. They are our parents, aren't they? We must obey them.

Mishuk: Nothing would happen even if they hit us. Children are always *chhoto* (young) in their mothers' eyes.

Naveed: Doesn't matter how big we grow-up, we are always young in parents' eyes.

Mukul: [Parents] hit for our betterment. So that we don't become *kharap* (bad). They hit for our *bhalo* (good).

In a similar way Conticini and Hulme (2007), through their research with children who are living in the streets in Bangladesh, also illustrate how children broadly frame violence from two perspectives: legitimate and illegitimate violence. The violence targeted towards children by adults for discipline and education is considered by children as '*nedgio bichar* (fair punishment)'; other violence which children could not justify was described as '*onedgio bichar* (unfair violence)' (Conticini and Hulme, 2007, p. 218).

While children however may have strong views about what they consider legitimate and illegitimate forms of violence, this does not mean that they passively accept even legitimate forms. While they spoke in some instances about their belief in the need to conform and comply with all forms of adult authority they also had techniques and strategies to undermine it. A conversation between 10-year-old Pia and her friend 12-year-old Champa illustrates the strategies they take to reduce the impacts of physical punishments.

Pia: Last year I used to attend an NGO-run school in the camp... It is true that I couldn't read at that time. When the teacher asked me to read, I couldn't. Then they would almost smash my hands smacking. They would ask me to read six pages, is it a joke! If I couldn't read then they would smack bang (*thash, thash*). They would hit hard (*jore jore*).

Champa: The head teacher used to scold. He used to smack by his hand, using a cane stick.

Pia: It would hurt. Then I would pour water on the wound [laughs]. I never told my mum [laughs]. If I had told mum, then she would scold me again. Then again, she would say, [mimicking her mum's angry expression] 'you don't study, you deserve smacking. If you don't study and play around, then you deserve a few smacks. Why have you come here to me now and telling me all that? If you learn your lessons, you deliver your lessons, then how come that anyone would smack you'. This is true. I used to play a lot in my *chhoto bela* (childhood). [Do you know] what I used to do? I used to keep my book open underneath my book bag. Then while writing, I would have a look at the book if I didn't know what to write. If 'Madam' [the teacher] could notice then she would smack bang bang bang (*thash thash mair*) [laughs].

Champa: Madam used to hit on my back. Then when I would take shower, it would burn. Then my mum would ask [hearing some sound of pain] what has happened? I would say, 'I have got a cut on my leg' [laughs]. I never told her that I was smacked in school. Later, I would put some tape [band-aids] on the wound.

Extracts from a group discussion, girls' group, 8 September 2016

Children's narratives also show how they negotiate with adults to stop violent practices, and what role family culture plays in mediating these processes of negotiations. Nishi, 16, is aware of the 'rotten' side of the camp but unwilling to take it for granted that, as a resident of the camp, she must embrace its 'rotten' culture. Nishi specifically rejects claims she is, or could be, a 'camp girl' (*camp er meye*) (see section 4.2 of Chapter

Four). Nishi learned from the parent/child dynamics of her next-door cousins, where her uncle and aunt used abusive language towards their sons that parents' behaviours could negatively influence their children. In contrast, from other relatives who live in a different town, Nishi claimed that a calmer and less disciplinarian environment within the family, as well as the neighbourhood more generally, have a positive influence on children, thereby linking personal behaviour with socio-spatial morality. While her parents do not practise harsh disciplinary practices, Nishi, has had conversations about power and authority in the household and the need to break cycles of everyday violence:

I told my dad, 'If you [tells her father] scold or beat me – for no reason – one day I might throw this back to you. You would then say, how come that a daughter talks so badly with a dad! But it is you who started the *galagali* (yelling)'... We have friends in school. They are wealthy and rich – even then, they are my friends. If I ever get used to this *galagali* (yelling and bad words) [because of the negative influence of the camp/ family practices], then I might start using those with my friends too. They would then think that I have learned all these *galagali* as I grew up in the camp. (Nishi, 16, female, individual interview, 24 August 2016)

Children's economic power and their contribution to the family are often the stimulus to negotiate and create strategies to resist violence. In a group discussion, Rima, 12, said that she stopped going to the *karchupi karkhana* as the *mohajon* (the factory owner) smacked her if she did not do her work well. Rima told her mother and her older sister about the punishments and expressed her unwillingness to go to work anymore. During the time of our discussion, Rima was negotiating with her family regarding her decision to discontinue work.

What would they [family members] do if I don't go to the factory? Would they be able to force me and drag me to the factory? Even if they drag me, and I do not work well, would the *mohajon* continue to employ me after that? What would you do if your back is dashed against the wall? (*deyal e pith theke gese*) You must turn around. There is no other way around. (Extracts from a group discussion, 8 September 2016)

A few days later, I talked to Rima's mother, Hamida, 45, and her sister Rini, 25:

Hamida: Rima used to bring 200 taka every week. Now I don't know what is going on inside her head. She left the work [said in a tone of frustration]!

Rini: She used to work really nicely! Now she is only hanging around with other girls. She doesn't even bother even if I give her a few smacks. She says, 'what would happen if you hit me? What best would happen? I would die! I would die!' She is saying that she won't go to that work again. We asked her why? Asked her so many times [the reasons for discontinuing work]! She didn't give a reason. She only says that *mohajon* scolds, swears, and shouts. She stopped going to work only for this reason!

Extracts from a group interview, 26 September 2016

Hitting, smacking, and shouting are so normalised in this context, that they are not considered violent, let alone any justifiable reason to refuse to work. Nevertheless, Rima could stand firm on her position because of the power of her economic influence, and her potential to bring in income in the future. Her mother and older sister did not want to upset her as the family values even the little contribution she makes.

Having the authority to discipline their children does not necessarily make parents feel powerful however and several parents expressed their feelings of vulnerability when children challenged the generational power hierarchy and interrogated the notion of adult authority over children:

Ramjan: We should explain our children first. If they don't understand then surely we must smack/hit (*maar-dhor*). Don't you see what I mean?

Solaiman: Children argue in your face if you beat them! [Said with a tone of astonishment]

Amjad: Children are *beyadob* (disobedient/unruly) these days. Too much *beyadob*. I am a fully grown-up man now, even then, if my mother tells something to me, I keep my head down<sup>30</sup>. I don't talk back. Even if she hits me with a slipper, I would accept that hitting. But if I talk like this to my son, then he would argue.

Jiniya: How do you see it?

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<sup>30</sup> In traditional cultural practice in Bangladesh, it is considered impolite to look straight in the eyes of someone who is older in age or in kinship terms

Amjad: I consider it *beyadobi* (unruly/defiant). If he says something which he is not supposed to say, then I should consider this as *beyadobi*.

Ramjan: To date I haven't spoken straight into my parents' eyes. And if I just give my kids a scold, then they would answer back. What else to do then? It further escalates the anger. If the anger increases then I give him a few slaps... The sense of respect [towards the older generation] has gone away... [Ramjan describes an incident in detail where he had an argument with his son for not doing his studies regularly. In relation to that conversation, he continued] my son further told me off. He said, 'have you gone crazy' (*tumi ki pagol hoye gecho*)! [Others laugh] Can you believe my son told me that I have become crazy! Now you see! How shameless he has become that he is calling his own dad crazy!

Extracts from a group discussion, fathers' group, 8 November 2016

Elsewhere, parents discussed the relationship between economic strain and increased violence in their everyday family lives:

Jashim: Our work is for our tummy [to get food]. If we work then rice will get into our stomach, otherwise, it won't. We always have this stress. Then [coming home from outside], when I see that kids are being naughty, I will certainly have anger. What else happens when we are angry? Either dad smacks and mum scolds, or mum smacks and dad scolds.

Tofa: If I am angry, I don't feel good until I express my anger.

Jiniya: How do you express your anger?

Tofa: If I am angry I will first give a smack or two to my kids and then I will tell them what they should or shouldn't do. Then gradually my anger drops.

Extracts from a group discussion, fathers' group, 10 November 2016

Parvin, 40, a mother of three children, used to work as a volunteer in an NGO and her role was to organise the mothers from the camp. She attended a few child rights awareness-raising sessions organised by the NGO. Parvin shared her experiences:

I used to smack my children before [receiving the training]. I did. To be honest, I smacked them yesterday as well. There are times when one needs to hit their child. There are times when one needs to keep their child inside their heart. If I explain



something and they realise then I won't hit them. But if I try to explain something, and they don't listen to it, then I shall hit or scold. If you try to explain me something, and I don't get it, then, of course, you will tell me off. *Mar er nam babaji* [she uses a local proverb, where it means that if someone is being smacked, only then they will show respect to the person]. (Parvin 40, Mother, individual interview)

### 6.3 Relational power dynamics and *maan-shomman*

This section will link back to the discussions in Chapter Four (section 4.2) around concepts of *maan-shomman* (respectability) and the 'good/bad' child. Both children and adults view these ideas as embedded in relational power dynamics, around both gender and generation and entrenched in cultural norms and expectations. Several children described *maan-shomman* as an inter-generational asset, which is not just individually held, but is also acquired and lost by individual members for the whole family. Mosharrof, 11, said:

Mosharrof: Why should we lose *shomman* of our parents by playing? Is there any need for this? If parents have *shomman*, then that is their boys' and girls' *shomman* too. That's why instead of wasting time for no reason [such as through playing], we work during that time.

Jiniya: What made you think that playing would drop *shomman*?

Mosharrof: It would drop *shomman*, as well as time. Don't you understand? If we play with friends then surely there would be some fights and chaos. This is the reason.

Extracts from a group discussion, boys' group, 19 August  
2016

The concept of 'good child' therefore relates to 'good parenting' and vice-versa:

They [people in the community] would say that you are such a big girl now and yet roaming around! They say that [look] her mother has freed her, she is wandering here and there. The mother is not saying anything to her. She is sleeping inside her home [says in a satiric tone to mean that the mother is careless]. Isn't she able to make her daughter understand? (Faizun 13, female, group discussion, 7 August 2016)

Conversely of course, as respectability is an inter-generational asset, there is an equally strong correlation between bad parenting and the inevitable outcome of bad children, Nishi describes how these ideas play out in her extended family the:

Actually, his parents [Nishi's uncle and aunt, the parents of her cousins] are not good. If someone scolds and swears in front of their children, then the children would say, let me say a bad word too! From the time we grew up, my parents have never been harsh to us at home. I also told my dad, 'Abbu, you know, as we live in the camp, our 'society' [community] is like the 'camp'. But if we want, we can live like 'society' outside the camp too! It is not that we are living in the camp so we can't live like others in the camp... *Maan-shomman* is the wealth. My dad told me, 'it doesn't matter that we don't have money. Today we don't have any money. But you grow up as *boro* (someone respectable)'... *Maan-shomman* is everything. It doesn't matter that they [her cousins] are rich, they argue, quarrel, and use bad languages with their parents. Money doesn't add anything when they don't have any *maan-shomman*. (Nishi 16, female, individual interview, 24 August 2016)

Elsewhere, Rozina, 40, Nishi's mother, reflected, 'I liked what she said, because I realised whatever she is saying is not wrong'. Shedding light into relational power and practices related to *maan-shomman*, 'good/bad' children and physical punishment, Rozina, said:

Only *maan-shomman* is real. We live in a camp, but our family is different [better] from others in the camp. Many, in this camp, fight inside their house, hit each other; we do not have these among us. We eat if we have food, otherwise, we starve. But we would never fight with others. Not every family is the same [within the camp]. There are many who do not have education, there are many who do not interact with decent people. The environment, you know, the way people use their language tells about their ancestry. People do not understand this. This is the reason they engage in fights. (Rozina, 40, individual interview, 7 November 2016)

Parents equate avoiding harsh and abusive language as a central tenet of good parenting and as central to their ideas about *maan-shomman*. Khairun, 35, elaborates:

If we fight then people would say bad things about us. Let me tell you one thing if other children can use bad words, can't my children say one or two? But bad words won't come out of my children's mouths. Why not? Their mother has never used a bad word,

how would they say one? If I, as a mother, was bad, then they would have become bad too. If I were into *jhogra-fyasad* (fights and chaos), then children would learn that too. I don't like *jhogra-fyasad*. I live with my own *poribesh* (environment), they [the community members who are into fights and chaos] live with their *poribesh*. Do I need to get into that [fights and chaos]? I don't like *jhogra-fyasad* at all... I want that my children live with the *maan-shomman* that we are living with. So that no one can say anything bad about their parents. (Khairun 35, female, individual interview, 25 September 2016)

Once again, *maan-shomman* is a form of wealth and cultural capital and is used as a way of differentiating good families from bad. Sabita, 50, in an interview along with her son Jewel, 20, explained:

We are poor, but even though we are poor, we are raising our children with *maan-shomman*. I never dreamt of building a house. I have never bothered about my life. Even when my husband is sick, he doesn't even bother about his sicknesses. He is working for the children. [Our only concern is] how to raise our children? How to show them the right path? How to provide them an education so that they never have to stand at anyone's door [to beg]? How to support them so that they don't get frustrated?... Only *maan-shomman* is real. What I tell them is that never drown your dad's name [reputation]. I want your dad's name [reputation] to always remain as stable as it is now. This is the most important thing to me. The *shomman* of their father [such as to the family] ... We want nothing. We only want *maan-ijjot*. We don't want money, we don't want a home – only *maan-ijjot*. (Sabita 50, female, group interview, 26 October 2016)

Sohani, 28, also mentioned the importance of respect in her life. Sohani was hesitant to take up the role of a house cleaner as she considered this socially disrespectful work. However, she took up the role, has worked diligently for nine years with the same employer, and earned *shomman* through her hard work. Sohani was very proud of what she achieved and said that she wants to transfer that value to her children too. I was talking to Sohani at her home when she returned home for the lunch break. When we were about to finish our conversation, she received a call from her employer. After cutting off the phone Sohani said to me, 'it was my employer. I told them earlier that you would come today to talk to me. Now she just asked me gently how long it would take. She never raises her voice to me'. Sohani said:

No one wants to get along with *kharap* (bad) people, does any? Everyone wants to get along with *bhalo* (good) people. We don't have money. So, we want to live a decent

life. So that no one can say anything bad about us. So that others want to get along with us for our behaviour. If they consider me bad, then they would say badly of my daughter too. (Sohani, 28, individual interview, 26 October 2016)

Within the household, adult authority is not homogenous and the punishment of children is often clearly divided along gender lines, with maternal violence seen as more legitimate than paternal. Relational power dynamics between women and men therefore also define and shape the way children experience everyday violence (see sections 1.3.2 and 1.4.2 of Chapter One). Moreover, the gender of the parents, and the relationship between them, is also central to understanding children's experiences. Shomota, 47, mother of 11-year-old Shopno, for example, was keen to support the idea of physical punishment but only when legitimate and not as practised by her husband.

Have you seen children of this age? If a dad wants to say something, the child would stand up [to argue/answer back]. I saw that in my own eyes, a son hit his own mum. If a son tries to hit his mum, then is there any *shomman* (respect) left for the parent? The other day, my son [Shopno] also held his dad's hand [when his dad wanted to smack him]. From the time I came into this house, after my marriage, [I have seen] my husband swears in every word. Now I have got used to it. I do not count it anymore. [I say to him] you swear as much as you can. I don't say anything to him. Who would go to fight with him? We live in a camp. If we start fighting then people would gather at the door, they would take the fun out of it. No one will be there to solve it. They will then spread it to others that we were fighting. Then won't it drop down our *shomman*? I don't say anything to him. If you [the husband] think that you are being *boro* (big, here she said that in the sense of powerful) by abusing me then you better stay *boro*. My son said the other day, 'only swearing and bad words come out of his mouth. Can't he utter *durud shorif* (the sayings of the Prophet) instead?' This is the reason that his dad smacked him. This is the reason that his dad said, 'till today your mum couldn't say anything to me, now how dare you to say this to me?' (Shomota, 47, female, individual interview, 14 November 2016)

Physical violence is very common in the camp and is generally carried out along gender and generational axes so that men's violence against women is seen as legitimate as is all adult punishment against children. Men's violence against women is therefore crucial to understand as it often mirrors the violence that parents show towards their children and is excused in the same way. Women however do seem to distinguish between male violence – done in anger – towards them and their children

and their own, which they emphasise is done for the child's good although their feelings are highly ambivalent.

Koli: I feel *maya* (affection) for the child. Is there any mother who really wants to smack her child? Doesn't she feel *maya*? She gave birth to the child taking so much pain; she carried her in her womb for nine months. Would she ever want to smack her child? Mothers only do that when children become naughty.

Chapa: I only think that I am suffering [from domestic violence], but my children should never suffer.

Smriti: When I have a fight with my husband, then I give them [her children] a few smacks. [I tell them out of anger] you go away, get out of the house.

Koli: My husband beats me out of anger. He beat me the other day. Then I smashed my daughter like anything. [Seeing that] out of anger, he beat me again. [He said to me] Why would you smack my daughter? Why would you pour your anger for me to her?

Chapa: When we have fights between husband and wife, then I silently pass my children to my parents' house [in the next lane]. I tell them, 'you go outside now, he is beating me now, and he would then beat you too. Whenever he fights with me, he beats children too. He breaks stuffs. He would break the *karchupi* frame, and then he would hit me with that.

Koli: When men get angry, then they get out of their mind. My husband has lots of anger. He gets angry in tiniest thing. He admits his mistake later though. But he never understands when he fights. People would think badly of us. When he fights, then everyone from the nearby houses come around. Doesn't it feel bad then? Isn't it frightening that my husband is beating me? Won't it hurt?

Chapa: Earlier [before marriage], if I saw someone [women/girls] bearing abuse, I would say why is she tolerating this. Why did she marry that man? Later [after marriage], when it happened to me then I realised what has gone through in their lives.

Koli: Isn't it a shame to be beaten in front of children? I feel really ashamed. My kids cry. The other day my child said, 'no, Abbu, no!'

Chapa: My son said, 'if he [dad] beats you like this, I would beat him up once I grow up'... When my husband swears and uses bad words, then my son says, 'Abbu uses such bad words!' When children see all these, then how would they be able to do something good? The children certainly would do something bad too!

Referring to Murshida's, 30, husband, who beats his wife every day, Koli, 30, felt comparatively well treated and said, 'my husband gets angry only once or twice in a year, but her [Murshida's] husband gets that [extremely] angry every week, he becomes *pagol* (mad, crazy)!' Murshida stayed silent throughout, and a few of her friends commented, it is her 'silence' that encourage her husband to be even more violent towards her. Murshida was silent about her 'silence' in that discussion. However, a few other women explained the reasons for their silences including the fear that if they respond it might put their marriages at risk and jeopardise their 'social weight' and *maan-shomman* (respectability and dignity). They also fear this might affect the lives of their children and worry they may replicate this violence when they grow up. As many women prefer to be silent to avoid further violence, they often teach their children to remain silent too:

My daughter says if anyone says a bad word to me then shouldn't I respond back?' [I consider] This is bad, really bad. I don't like violence at all. [I believe] Allah will see what to do with the person who uses bad words. I will not say anything. Allah will do justice. I leave everything to Allah. (Parul 40, mother, individual interview, 26 September 2016)

Even though some women distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate forms of violence, others still justify male violence as a normal and understandable part of life. In the context of gender power hierarchy, women normalise domestic violence by internalising the dominant patriarchal ideology that considers male power over women as natural ways of the world (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourgois, 2009; see also section 1.2 and 1.3.2 of Chapter One). Sohani justifies and normalises men's violence against women as she says that, 'even the kings and monarchs abuse women, and we are mere poor people'. She, however, believes that poverty increases the chances of men being more violent against women, as traditionally men carry the financial burden of looking after the family and the external challenges often strain their relationships.

Being raised in an environment where men's abuse against women is normalised, and often trivialised, many male participants reported that they find it a threat to their patriarchal authority when women resist domestic violence.

Ramjan: I often shove anger to my wife – [sometimes] with my words or with my hands.

Solaiman: I can't always get physical with her [his wife]. Suppose, I am about to beat my wife, then she would yell at me. She would attempt to hit me, swear at me.

Amjad: Then [if the wife hit the husband] what would happen to my *izzat* (dignity/ respect)? If I attempt to hit her, and she, out of anger, holds my shirt, then people around would see that she hold my shirt [as a way of protesting the hitting]. Then what would happen to my *maan-shomman* (respect/ dignity). Rather it is better that I don't scold her. Better, I don't beat her. If both of us get hot-tempered then we would have fights. If possible [to avoid the fight] it is better to leave the house, [it helps] to lower the anger. If required, I would rather not be at home for four-five hours.

Ramjan: By the time discussion started that men and women have equal rights, the torture of women increased even more.

Extracts from a group discussion, fathers' group, 8 November 2016

Men's deep-rooted disapproval of gendered equity is vividly expressed by the satirical comment of Ramjan, who said, while others applauded him, that 'since the time the discussion started that men and women have equal rights, women started to *nirjaton* (abuse) men'. Thus, Ramjan's wife's refusal to serve him dinner one day after she got angry with him is claimed as 'women's abuse of men'. In the patriarchal culture of the community, men expressed their fears that their *maan-shomman* might be jeopardised if women resist their violence, as women's resistance breaks the power dynamics between men and women in the community. Similarly, women also expressed that they fear the loss of their *maan-shomman* if their husbands beat them in front of their children, although did not fear losing their *maan-shomman* if the beatings were out of sight of others. While the fears of losing *maan-shomman* are driven by different factors for men and women, they share a common threat where the gendered and generational cultural practices and power dynamics are challenged.

## 6.4 Relational power inequalities and child marriage

Gender norms and unequal power dynamics constrain everyday experiences of girls and boys in many different ways and through both visible and invisible forms of violence. Several children in this research voluntarily described their perspectives on gendered inequalities and violence in relation to child marriage – a practice, like that of physical punishment, which is rooted in the concept of *maan-shomman*. Urmi, 18, explained:

Often girls start having relationships with boys and affairs during their adolescent years. This is the reason that often parents think that their daughters are going into *bhul poth* (wrong direction). In such instances, parents would *maar-dhor* (hit/smack) them. Then they would stop their education. In the end, they would arrange their daughters' marriages. Parents prefer to settle their daughters in marriages as they get anxious thinking that their children would bring disrespect (*oshomman*) to their families. (Urmi, 18, female, individual interview, 28 July 2016)

Several participants told me that child marriage is not the norm in the community any longer, and also said the trend of marrying children off early has reduced significantly over the last few years. Probhat, 40, said:

This is a camp, you know, in one single room there are the mother, the father, and their sons and daughters. So, when a daughter becomes 14-15 years old then the parents wish that if their daughter gets married and move out to her in-laws' house so they would have some peace. But let me tell you the truth – child marriage does not happen much these days. There is no such *jhuki* (risk) of child marriage in the camp now. (Probhat, 40, male, individual interview, 5 October 2016)

However early marriages still occur and Jibon, a primary school teacher, referred to the lack of communal and metaphorical safety as one of the push factors for child marriage:

Many parents want to marry their daughters off early for social security reasons. As the girls grow older then parents do not feel it safe for them to be outside. Often rumours spread out as and when a girl talks to another boy in the camp. People say terrible things about them. Thus, parents often prefer to marry their daughters off to avoid any rumours against them. (Jibon, 50, male, individual interview, 17 October 2016)

Among the few families who did marry off their daughters earlier than the legal age of marriage, all admitted that the reason that they married their daughters early was to protect the *maan-shomman* of the family. All of them said their daughters were in relationships and they feared if they did not get them married then they might run away or get married on their own which would bring more disgrace to their families. One afternoon I had a discussion with 15-year-old Diti, her mother Marufa, 46, and her brother Dulal, 22, at their home. After exchanging our initial greetings, the first thing that Marufa told me was about Diti, saying in a wry tone, 'she does not find interest in



studies! She has already achieved the thing that interests her [she referred to Diti's getting married]'. I was introduced to Marufa through one of the staff at the NGO *Oikotan* and I was initially unsure as to whether my connection with that NGO might make Marufa defensive. At the outset of our conversation, however, even before I asked anything about Diti, both Marufa and Dulal wanted to 'blame' Diti for her marriage, and to downplay their own parental/sibling responsibilities. Diti was mostly quiet during our conversation, which I initially assumed was shyness and reticence in front of her mother and brother. However, her mother pointed out a few times during our conversation that her daughter is *boka* (goofy, dopey), *buddhi nai* (dull and slow), by which she indicated that she has not fully matured with her age. It was only later that I realised Diti's silence was framed within the generational relationships of power, where Diti was silent to talk about the issue that has already brought shame and disgrace to the family (see Alderson and Yoshida, 2016; Spyrou, 2016a; see also discussion in section 3.6.2 in Chapter Three). I wanted to have an individual interview with Diti afterward but Marufa did not give her consent for that, and I had to rely on the narratives of Marufa and Dulal.

I gathered that Diti had been having a relationship with a 16-17-year-old boy from one of their neighbouring houses, and that one day they ran away from the camp. Through significant efforts by both families, they traced them to a faraway district of the country and they made them return to the camp within three days. Once they returned, Diti's parents and older brothers insisted the boy's family arrange their marriage, as otherwise, they feared that they would be the target of social shame. Marufa said, 'there are lids on pots but not on mouths' – meaning that rumours spread quickly in the camp and it would have been difficult for them to maintain a life of dignity if Diti was not married to the boy she had run away with. Marufa said, 'I would have never arranged for her marriage that early if there were no fear for the social pressure'. Diti's husband, who is also a child, is too young to take the responsibility of his wife; moreover, his parents are also not interested in formally accepting their daughter-in-law into the family, even though the marriage was registered with their approval and in their presence. Both Marufa and Dulal are aware of the possible uncertainty of Diti's marriage, and they do not have much confidence in her husband either, as they believe he takes drugs. Nevertheless, they feel relieved there was a marriage as this negates potential criticism about their *maan-shomman*.

There has been a growing consensus among the residents of the camp that child marriage is something 'bad' and 'not right'. Many participants referred to NGO interventions and government's advocacy initiatives, which helped them to become more informed about the legal age of marriage and consequences of child marriage.

Champa: Shumi is like 13 years old. She is very young, I mean, too young. They married her off. Haven't they married her off too early?

Rima: It is good that they married her off [said in a cynical tone]. She has read the Quran. And then she has done a few studies too. She can do all the household chores. Now she has been married – it has been good that she has been married. From my *andaaz* (speculation), I think that it has been good. She has not done her studies seriously though, thus they married her off [with a tone of cynicism, Rima indicated that the girl was not worthy enough to finish her studies, so she should be fated in marriage].

Champa: If someone is married off when they are *chhoto* (young) then her whole life is *borbad* (wasted). If someone is married off young then she won't be able to play, she won't be able to go here and there. Then she only should work!

Extracts from a group discussion, girls' group, 8 September 2016

In another discussion children said:

Shamsi: Among us, Diti has married early.

Jui: It is a problem if someone marries too young! She has to do loads of work. And when she has a baby then there are even more problems! She can even die while giving birth, and this can be difficult for the child too! It is not good to get married at young age.

Pria: Naila also married too early. When her family took her to the hospital to deliver the baby, then they [hospital staffs] were about to file a police case against them [for risking her life due to the untimely pregnancy].

Jui: [To Pria] do not say all these. Then *clickbaji* (plot or conspiracies) would start [if anyone hears us talking about these]. A few people are after plotting. Then that would trigger fights. They would take out their choppers and knives.

Pria: Yeah, it happens daily, every day.

Extracts from a group discussion, girls' group, 5 September 2016

Relating to these comments, some girls emphasised the importance of 'standing on own feet' as opposed to getting married too early and be dependent on their husband's income. Urmi, 18, expressed her aspiration 'to do something and to become someone' in her life. In section 5.3 of Chapter Five I described how Urmi had to drop out of her studies as she failed the HSC examination. However, she was firm in her aspiration that she wants to have 'an identity' of her own instead of relying on her husband as many of her peers would do. Urmi said, 'I would be able to do everything if I have my own capabilities (*jogyota*). I won't have to be a burden to anyone'. Urmi wanted to get a job so that she can support her parents as well as get 'established' before getting married. Yet given the limited opportunities she had due to her academic 'failure', Urmi was aware that her aspirations for having 'an identity' of her own were constantly challenged and confronted by social realities.

Rodela, 17, expressed her fear that her mother was planning for her marriage for which she was not the least prepared. However, Rodela was not sure how she would negotiate with her mother as she claimed her mother was 'emotionally blackmailing' her by saying that 'if I don't arrange for your marriage now then what would happen to you if I die soon'? Nevertheless, Rodela firmly expressed the view that young women must have some academic accomplishments prior to their marriages which might work as 'backup capital' in case their marriages run into difficulties (see also section 5.3 of Chapter Five). Rodela expressed her fear that 'what if he [would-be husband] gets me out of the house? What would I do then? Would I beg in the street? If I have an education then at least I would be able to get some job'. Even though Rodela's feelings about education are largely pragmatic, she gives an insight into the changing social norms where young women have started raising their voices for independence. Education becomes a protection strategy for many young women who, unlike their parents, do not have an uncritical reliance and confidence in marriage. The observation and narrations of Urmi, Rodela, and Nishi suggest that having an academic certificate gives symbolic power to a married woman which can help her negotiate authority in the marital relationships. Thus, they place importance on gaining certificates so that 'if something wrong happens' [such as divorce, domestic violence] they would be able to get a job and support themselves.

Many parents also supported this view. Sohani, 28, was married when she was 13 years old. A photo of a young bride, in a blue *saree* with a shy smile, which was framed

and hung on their wall, caught my attention the very first time I entered their house. Showing me the photo Sohani told me in an apologetic tone:

That was not the age for me to get married. There was not much awareness about the legal age of marriage at that time. I was even younger than Tonima [her 13-year old daughter] is today. Now if someone arranges a marriage of a girl before she is 18 then they would have a police case for child abuse. This is the reason that we are just sitting quietly without thinking about our daughter's marriage. [Sohani reminisced about a friendly discussion with her mother-in-law who died a few years back] I told my mother-in-law one day, 'you have brought me in this house so young, now I would arrange your grand-daughter's marriage that young' [said in a jokey tone]. She then told me that, 'no, please don't do the same mistake'. Then I asked her, why did you then do that with me? Why did you bring me to this house so young? It was then time for me to play, and you gave me the burden of the family on my shoulder for which I was not the least prepared for'. She used to tell me that they did not have much sense on that then. (Sohani, 28, female, individual interview, 26 October 2016)

Jamuna, 30, was also married young (around the age of 16). She concurred with Sohani:

I did not understand all these then. Now I know what would be good for my children and what would make my children's lives better. I was young and as I grew up I went to someone else's place [in-laws' place]. I got married and I became a mother too. How would I realise everything? My daughter would go to someone else's place one day! She would have to lead a decent life. She would have to raise her children too! I haven't done any education. But I must educate my children. (Jamuna, 30, female, individual interview, 25 September 2016)

Changing attitudes and knowledge of the drawbacks of early marriage do not necessarily protect children however and even though Jamuna aspires for her children to have an education, her eldest daughter Meghla had to drop out of school due to poverty and to fulfil her caring responsibilities. While it may be the case that there is a changing realisation about the importance of education and the negative consequences of child marriage, the constraints of everyday life continue to challenge many parents.

Kabori, 48, explained how her own perceptions of child marriage have evolved over the last few years since Diba, her eldest daughter, was married off at the age of 13. When Kabori came to know about Diba's relationship with a boy from the camp, Kabori became worried about two things. She was primarily concerned about her daughter's choice, as she believed the boy was addicted to drugs, and secondly, she was concerned about the family's *maan-shomman* if they did not agree on the marriage and her daughter ran away from home. Kabori told me that their primary concern was not the age of their daughter – as she said, 'there was no law against child marriage [such as awareness of the law] at that time'. But her perception has developed over the years, 'now I have learned that daughters should not be married off until they are 18. This can be harmful to them. If a baby arrives then she might even die. Thus, I became alert. My two younger daughters are also not thinking of any relationships as yet which I really like about them'. Kabori's middle daughter Ratri, 16, complemented her mother by saying that:

Diba *Apu* (sister) did a mistake. Now we don't want to have the same fate as her. Now we [Ratri and her youngest sister Nodij] say our older sister has done this; we won't let this happen to us. Diba also tries to make us understand, she says, don't do anything like this. Now this strikes my brain, when my older sister alerted us on this, she surely has learned this from her experiences. She is speaking from her griefs, isn't she? When someone experience griefs only then she can share this to others. She experienced pains and then she alerted us on that. When someone sees thorns on the road, only then she can aware others to not take that road. This is what I learned from my sister. Am not I right, *Apu*? I will not take that road [of affairs and marriage]. (Ratri, 16, female, group interview, 20 October 2016)

## 6.5 Breaking the inter-generational cycle of violence

Despite the centrality of various forms of violence in their everyday lives, several participants did talk about how to break this cycle and how they stood out against the normative power structures and forms of everyday violence in their families.

Kabori had a wonderful relationship with her mother-in-law and she wanted to replicate this with her own daughter-in-law.

I want to keep my daughter-in-law in a way that she doesn't name [misses] her parents. I need to keep my *chheler bou* (daughter-in-law) like my *meye* (daughter). There are many differences between a *meye* and a *bou* though. I would never be her [daughter-in-law's] mother; neither would she ever be my own daughter. *Bou* always stays a *bou* and a *shashuri* (mother-in-law) always remains a *shashuri*. But we need to give them their due *odhikar* (rights) in respective places... I understand as I came into someone else's house [after marriage], my *bou* has also come here to make *shongshar* (family). I left my parents to do *shongshar* in this house. Shouldn't I then give importance to her opinions? Otherwise, she would not stay with us .... [After my marriage] I wanted some space to talk to my husband. We didn't have that space at that time. I didn't even get the opportunity to talk to my husband. I did not get all these things. Isn't there grief inside me then? I have learned from this grief that I need to make a space for my son and daughter-in-law... I need to allow them to spend some time on their own. (Kabori 48, female, group interview, 20 October 2016)

Unlike several other women, who often speak of being oppressed by other women and men in the family, especially their in-laws, and who then go on to act in an equally oppressive and even abusive way with their daughters-in-law, Kabori here plays an active role in breaking the cycle of traditional power structures in her relationships with her daughter-in-law. She acknowledges 'a daughter-in-law cannot be the same as my own daughter, and I cannot be the replacement of the mother of my daughter-in-law' but believes in making a very conscious and concerted effort to break these cycles of abuse and to acknowledge the dynamics of the relationship and to maintain openness and empathy towards each other.

Sohani also told me that she finds inspiration from her mother-in-law who was empathetic and supportive towards her even at times when her husband was abusive. Sohani said,

My mother-in-law brought me in this family when I was very young [she was married at 13]. Later, she raised me up in this family. I have learned many lessons from my mother-in-law. She also had the confidence that her daughter-in-law would not go wrong. That's how it was possible to keep the family! If she had not trusted me, then I would probably have to leave the house. But with the grace of Allah, my mother-in-law was good. So, it became possible to maintain the family. (Sohani 28, female, individual interview, 26 October 2016)

Sobita, however, is less confident in finding the right daughter-in-law and treating her well. Instead, she wants to break the cycle of violence by arranging her children's marriages to Bangali families so that they do not have to carry the stigma related to being both Bihari and camp residents:

I will arrange my daughter's marriage in a Bangali family [said with determination]. No, I will not arrange with a Bihari family. I have been trapped [in this camp] after coming into a Bihari family [after marriage, she is originally Bangali]. I gave birth to my daughter in Bangladesh, in the land of Bangladesh [said with pride]. I will arrange my daughter's marriage in a Bangali family. My daughter would then become a local. So that she doesn't have the same fate as mine. I will also arrange my son's marriage in a Bangali family too. If you row a boat from two ends, the boat can't go to both direction, it can only go towards one direction. I also want to follow one direction, only Bangali. So that the next generation becomes only Bangali. (Sabita 50, female, group interview, 26 October 2016)

Nazma's narratives suggest that women rarely have such support however and have to rely on their own will power and inner strength. When Nazma, now aged 32, was seven years old, her father died, while her mother was in an advanced stage of pregnancy. Her baby brother died two days after his birth and eventually, her mother became *mad* (pagol). Nazma suddenly became the carer of her 'mad' mother and a three-year-old sister. She initially started working as a house cleaner, and then as an assistant of a cook at a local canteen, and later as a carrier of illegally imported clothes. Nazma, was married by her own choice when she was around 15 years old but both her husband and her mother-in-law abused her.

I did not do any fuss about that. Because I did not have my mother, or my sister, or anyone else around me to support me. I was alone, on my own. I did not have any relatives nearby with whom I could have shared my griefs and distresses. I didn't have any. Thus, I used to console myself by crying on my own. (Nazma, 32, female, individual interview, 17 August 2016)

Eventually, Nazma's strong character, and her husband's failings as a son, a husband, and a father triggered her to take control of her life and that of her family. Even though Nazma did not have any institutional education or family support, she drew on her life experiences to build resilience during the challenging time of her marriage. She started

at first as a home-based *karchupi* worker, and gradually evolved into an outsource entrepreneur of *karchupi* business. Nazma explained,

When I saw that our family was going through scarcity I stepped out of the home. I never let my children realise hardships – I took the load on my own. I told my husband, you don't need to worry that I work outside the home. He agreed with what I said. Why did he agree on that? Because I had my life experiences. I knew that I would be able to do this. I don't have any schooling, but I have life experiences... People often say that they forget the past – but I never forget my past. Neither I forget nor do I let my children forget that. I tell them that, you see my children, I worked so hard in my life [she cried as she said this], and you must not go through the same hardships in your lives. (Nazma, 32, female, individual interview, 17 August 2016)

Naila, 15, also claimed that as she married by her own choice she felt obliged to bear the abuses of her mother-in-law. During our conversation, Naila mentioned several times that 'what else to do, I married by my own choice'. She said, 'If I were married by my parents' choice then I could have put pressure on them if my husband did anything wrong. I could have told my parents that you made me get married to this person'. Indeed Papri, 18, confirmed this, telling me that just a few weeks before her marriage she told her parents 'that if anything happens [marital complications] after my marriage then you would be responsible for that. Because I am not marrying in my own choice. They said, 'yeah, let's see what is on your luck, we are with you'. Papri said that she was not ready for her marriage now, but her family members pressurised her by saying that her elderly grandmother wants to see her married before her death. Papri did not have any choice in the decision-making process of the marriage but was trying to force her parents to take responsibility should anything go wrong. Naila, however, remained ambivalent about her choices and even though she could not blame her parents and get them to accept responsibility, her own agency and sense of having made choices were also forms of resilience and sources of pride.

They [parents] would never realise one thing. The marriage was by my own choice but so what? If my parents have made the decision then wouldn't ever have any complications happened? It is true that I wanted to get married. But it is my parents who organised everything. It is not that I ran away from home. Or I did something else [she referred to premarital sexual relationship] ... Now I just want that no one can ever tell my husband that he has brought a *bou* (wife) at home who is not a decent one. I got married at a young age but I use my brain. Yeah, I married early. But now what



else to do? Doesn't matter how much I swipe my *kismaat* (luck), I can't alter my luck. That's why I just want that nobody gets the chance to say anything to me nor him. If I go to a big place [she meant a place which is better than the camp] then people would say, 'she got married at such a young age' [she copied a satirical tone]! I want people to say that 'yeah, they married at a young age, but they are doing well and living happily'... I want people to say that I use my sense – so that no one ever shames me for being young. (Naila, 15, female, group discussion, 11 August 2016)

For other children, minimising the distance between themselves and their parents and negotiating new forms of family dynamics, which emphasised openness and cooperation, were ways of challenges everyday violence related to relational power hierarchies. Tonima, 14, explains:

My Ammu (mum) is my Ammu, and my Ammu is also my friend. I say everything to Ammu, everything that is on my mind. If I say something [some secret] to my friend, then she might tell this to someone. But my Ammu will never share this to anyone... This is the reason that I don't get along with anyone in the camp. I straight come back home [from school]. They [peers] talk on my back, that I am showing off *demag* (vanity) as I am beautiful, [and] good at my studies. I don't give any response to those. If I say a word, then it will lead to ten words. This is the reason I listen with my one ear and take all out from the other ear. We don't have such practices at home that I will reply back to their bad words. If I behave *kharap* (bad) staying with those who are *kharap* then I will be *kharap* myself. If I want to stay *bhalo* (good), then I can be *bhalo*. This is what I have learned from my mum... None would want my *bhalo* other than my family. Family is everything! (Tonima, 14, female, individual interview, 2 August 2016)

## 6.6 Summary

The findings discussed in this chapter show children's and adults' experiences of everyday violence within families where generational power structures and cultural practices have normalised children's experiences of physical punishments to the extent that they are not considered as violence. The narratives of children and adults draw out the contested power dynamics related to gender and generation, which can unsettle power hierarchies within families. Returning to earlier discussions about the concept of *maan-shomman* (respectability) and the notion of 'good child', this chapter illustrates how these are strongly linked to the inter-generational cultural practices; where conforming to adults' authority endorse children's sense of belonging into the

communal construct of good children. This chapter then argued that, with the growing realisation of the negative consequences of child marriage, children who are married, experience stigma and exclusion and other covert forms of everyday violence, in the form of social shaming and isolation, which further jeopardise the children and their families. Overall, the findings in this chapter suggest that reality of children's experiences of everyday violence is complex: that children have to go through constant negotiations and confrontation with gendered and generational practices in their everyday lives, while, at the same time, they constantly negotiate their agency to challenge and respond to the everyday power dynamics in the community.

## 7 Conclusions

### 7.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined children's experiences of everyday violence in an Urdu-speaking Bihari camp in Bangladesh. The overarching research question was: how do children experience their everyday lives in an urban slum context in Bangladesh? This question was then divided into three sub-questions.

1. What are the experiences and understandings of everyday life among children and their parents in the socio-spatial context of Urdu-speaking Bihari camp in Bangladesh?
2. How does the idea of everyday violence play out in their lives?
3. How do children construct, negotiate, and exercise their agency in response to everyday violence?

In this concluding chapter, I explore the ways this thesis answered the research questions. First, I consider how this study informs and extends existing scholarship before restating the core arguments of this thesis that examine the relationship between children's experiences of violence and their agency. Then, I reflect on my personal journey while relating that to some implications for practice. Finally, I make a few suggestions for future areas of research on this topic.

### 7.2 Reflections and findings

Empirical research on children's experiences of everyday violence and agency is still nascent in the field of Childhood Studies. To this end, my research has contributed to this field by examining children's experiences of everyday violence and agency in an Urdu-speaking Bihari camp in Bangladesh (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004b; Wells *et al.*, 2014; Maternowska *et al.*, 2018; Pells and Morrow, 2018; Pells *et al.*,

2018). This thesis has illustrated that violence is not something detached or distant from children's experiences: instead violence is threaded through children's everyday lives in the camp. This study also builds on contemporary discussions within Childhood Studies which call for more critical explorations of children's lives through nuanced understanding of central tenets of the field such as the social construction of childhood and the importance of children's agency (Spyrou, 2018; Spyrou, Rosen and Cook, 2018; Abebe, 2019; Prout, 2019). In line with this call, and taking a relational standpoint, I explored children's relationships of power across spaces, gender, and generation. Fundamental to this ontological turn of Childhood Studies is the belief that the complexities of children's lives are constituted as assemblages where children negotiate their positions with other children and adults within their contexts (Spyrou, 2018, 2019; Spyrou, Rosen and Cook, 2018). In advancing this argument, my research explored children's lives in relation to adults who significantly shape and influence children's everyday experiences. The ethnographic accounts of children in this thesis, therefore, are closely linked to those of adults and their arguments are threaded through the broader historical, cultural, social, and spatial fabric of their lives. In doing this, I explored the contextual and relational processes that shape children's agency, which are more ambiguous and complex than is initially apparent. This demonstrated children's agency is intertwined with gendered and generational relationships of power, manifested in birth order, the number of siblings in a family, as well as in the spaces and places within which children operate in their everyday lives (see also Pells *et al.*, 2018). This has generated useful insights into the realities of the lives of children and adults, where they constantly negotiate and contest their relationships within the context of mundane precariousness.

This study significantly contributes to the scholarship on childhood in Bangladesh (Kabeer, 2000; Conticini and Hulme, 2007; White, 2007; Heissler, 2008; Ahsan, 2015; Atkinson-Sheppard, 2017b). There has been some important research on children's experiences in Bangladesh (see section 1.4 of Chapter One) but, with a few exceptions, most of these are commissioned by either the government or the international funding agencies. While these studies provide useful evidence on the challenges children experience, they often do not have the scope or capacity to capture the multiplicity, fluidity, and complexity of children's everyday lives. Most of these studies, moreover, focus on specific themes or particular target groups but rarely look at communities holistically. To my knowledge, there has not been any ethnographically grounded study that illustrates children's experiences of everyday violence and

explores their agency in Bangladesh. Moreover, given the way Biharis have been marginalised in academic literature, my research fills a gap about Bihari children's lives, their experiences of everyday violence, and their agency.

This thesis has shown that central to the discourses around the construction of childhood in the camp is the idea of the 'good' versus the 'rotten' child – a notion that is closely linked to the discussion of good/rotten spaces. Children's mobility, aspirations, and opportunities are explicitly related to everyday discourses about the rottenness in the camp and, children constantly negotiate their agency in their relationships with other children and adults, as they negotiate, resist or try to affirm themselves as good children. Related to this discussion, the notion of *maan-shomman* or respectability is ubiquitous in the camp, whereby both children and adults aspire for *maan-shomman* for themselves and their families, and strive to achieve this by conforming to normative forms of an ideal childhood, in an attempt to distance themselves from the 'rottenness' of the camp (see also Heissler, 2012; White, 2012; Ahsan, 2015; UNICEF, 2018).

Children engage in and make sense of their everyday spaces in numerous ways and this thesis interrogated the subtleties of children's experiences and explored their everyday negotiations within the social spaces. The Urdu-speaking Biharis in the camp are linguistically and socially, as well as ideologically, different to most Bangladeshis. However, the sense of 'them' and 'us' is apparent not only between the Bangladeshis and the Biharis but also between the camp-based and non-camp based Urdu-speaking Biharis. Yet this relationship is complex and while children and adults living in the camp often compare themselves unfavourably to their non-camp based peers, the ability, or merely the prospect, of socio-cultural integration outside the camp offers the possibility of gaining symbolic power (see Bourdieu, 1991; also see section 1.4 of Chapter One). Social relationships and connections with friends and relatives outside the camp can therefore work as forms of social capital, adding symbolic power to the otherwise powerless children and adults in the camp. This power remains ambiguous however and involves children socially distancing themselves from their camp-based peers and thus potentially cutting themselves off from peer support within the camp. Children's experiences of violence in the camp exist on a continuum between the private space of the home and the public space of the camp. Given the complexity of the camp context, the boundary across the public and the private is blurred and children go

through a process of constant negotiation and compromise as they try to embrace the culture of the public spaces.

This thesis has investigated how violence is threaded throughout children's lives including through their everyday experiences of education and work. Within the structural constraints of camp life, children's and parents' decisions, choices, and aspirations for children's work/education are closely linked to the inter-generational relationships of reciprocity, norms, and practices in relation to gender and generation, as well as sibling composition and birth order (Morrow and Boyden, 2018; Pells and Morrow, 2018). While both children and adults expressed their awareness of the importance of education, their opportunities are often compromised by poverty and, therefore, their decisions in relation to prioritising work over education has to be fairly pragmatic. The existing market economy, and the absence of any social safety net, meant that neither children nor adults could see any reasonable advantage in investing their time and resources in education, especially as the existing educational structures provide little flexibility or opportunity to combine education and work. Yet, the ideal, and expressed aspiration, of education remains strong and is closely related to the communal constructions of both 'good children' and 'good spaces'. In an attempt to be seen as being part of the idealised category of 'good child' and to embrace respectability, many children and adults expressed their desire for education which they hoped might add symbolic power to their otherwise disadvantaged lives (Galtung, 1969; Bourdieu, 1991; see also section 1.2 in Chapter One). Children also aspire to education with the hope and promise of a better future, but against the backdrop of structural inequalities, their experience of education is more likely to be one of broken promises, which leads them to disappointment, compromise and even the abandonment of their hopes. However, this negotiation is complex and children do not always see giving up or changing their aspirations for education as sacrifice or a form of suffering, because, within their own socio-cultural context, children understand that engaging in work, as opposed to chasing the mirage of education, is part of an 'inter-generational contract' with their parents (see Kabeer, 2000).

Children's experiences of everyday violence exist at the intersection of relational power and inequalities in gender and generation, shown in particular through more overt forms of violence, such as physical punishments. Smacking and hitting, or the threats of these, are among the most ordinary forms of violence that children experience as part of their everyday lives in the camp. Adults exercise physical and emotional

punishments not only for discipline but also as legitimised practices of inter-generational relationships, practices that are then repeated by older children on younger ones. Moreover, physical punishment is a way of displaying power over those who structurally have less power because of age, gender, birth order, kinship, or access to resources. In this way, physical and emotional force is not only exercised between adults and children; it occurs between men and women, as much as between women and children (see also White, 2007; Ennew, 2008; Kabeer and Mahmud, 2009). The exploration of children's and adults' accounts of these forms of violence illustrates the nuances and limitations of power: possession of inter-generational authority does not necessarily guarantee power to individuals, and adults can feel vulnerable when children challenge this generational power. In a similar way, men feel threatened when women interrogate and challenge their authority.

These more obvious forms of violence closely relate to more covert forms of violence, predicated on controlling children's behaviour through recourse to notions of *maan-shomman* or respectability and to ideas about the good or rotten child. This normative assumption to be 'good' is transferred across generations, where *maan-shomman* is considered as a generational asset, and both children (girls and boys) and adults (women and men) collectively aspire to uphold their individual and family respectability. In this regard the practice of child marriage is central to discussions of everyday violence because the practice is entrenched to this notion of *maan-shomman*. Parents often rationalise decisions about their children's marriages by recourse to the idea that, in the context of patriarchal power and precariousness in the camp, marriage, even when performed at an illegally early age, can safeguard them from disgrace (see White, 2015; also section 1.4.2 in Chapter One).

Despite all of the problems however and the prevalence of many forms of violence the camp is also a dynamic and evolving space. Some of the social changes in Bangladesh as a whole such as a greater awareness of the importance of education and, the negative effects of physical punishments and child marriage, have filtered down into the camp and awareness of them is evident in the narratives of many children and adults. There is a growing consensus among young women about education, which they believe can challenge gender power dynamics in future marriages. Many adults also discussed their evolving perspectives about child marriage as some have begun to prioritise children's education over marriage, while others see education as a passport to better marriages which can ensure some protection for their daughters.

### 7.3 Reflections on my own journey – from a practitioner to a researcher

As I mentioned in the Preface, my interest in this research stemmed from my experience as a child protection practitioner in Bangladesh. In Chapter Three I outlined why it is important to situate myself reflexively in this research. In this section I return to this issue to reflect on my own journey from a child protection practitioner to a Ph.D. researcher, and illustrate how that shaped and influenced my own views and positions in working with children.

I indicated in the Preface (see also section 3.8 of Chapter Three), that my initial intention was to explore children's resilience in order to see how children cope and survive while living in difficult circumstances. My interest in resilience derived from the yearning to see children as 'survivors', not as 'victims' and I wanted to paint a 'positive' image of the children in this difficult context. However, as I started talking to children and adults, and observed them in their day-to-day lives, I realised the concept of resilience was not something which my research participants associated with themselves: however they did talk about how they constantly negotiated and constructed their agency. Over the course of my fieldwork, the temptation to see them as 'survivors' gave way to understanding how they exercise their agency, or more importantly, how they compromise and negotiate their agency in their routine lives: lives which were led under circumstances of everyday violence.

This research challenged my previous practitioner self who considered violence from a far more compartmentalised and individualised perspective. The findings do not give any straightforward explanation as to whether child marriage, school dropout, children's work, and corporal punishment are the cause or a symptom of the ubiquity of violence in the community. Yet when I look back to my practitioner self, I know that I surely would have had a clear answer to this problem. I would have said child marriage is a violation of children's right to protection. I would have said education for all and no child labour. I would have echoed what others say about forbidding physical punishments. This research, however, showed me that children's relationships with everyday violence and agency are more complex and nuanced than what I could capture earlier in my capacity as a child protection practitioner. Moreover, children's experiences of violence are not compartmentalised either – rather they are closely



interwoven into the broader fabric of their routine lives. I would argue therefore that development organisations need to take a more assertive role as brokers between communities and funding agencies so that there is a two-way flow of conversations and dialogue. There should be a genuine interest in listening to what children and adults in the local context say, rather than what the funding bodies want to hear.

Attempts to see positive changes in children's lives often limit child protection practitioners in their ability to be fully engaged with, and holistically informed about, the historical, political, economic, and socio-cultural contexts that perpetuate violence in diverse contexts. Thus, every so often, child protection interventions do not problematise the nuances of children's agency, and do not leave room to be critical about the underlying causes of violence. One of the participants of this research associated NGOs interventions with failed attempts to heal pain without looking at the root cause of the problem.

Sometimes it makes me laugh. Suppose, I have a stomachache. Now the doctor advises me to eat *jau-bhat* (rice puree). I am also following the doctor's advice. But my pain does not heal over time. Now if the doctor doesn't find out that I have a tumour in my stomach then would *jau-bhat* heal my pain? (Harun 50, group discussion, fathers' group)

This research has helped me to evolve as I explored children's experiences of violence from wider socio-structural perspectives. The accounts of participants gave me the confidence to explore and explain the complex role of different forms of violence intertwined in children's everyday lives. I believe anyone interested in working with children in a majority world context would benefit if they acknowledge and recognise these realities of children's lives.

## 7.4 Future research possibilities

My research raised as many questions as it answered and while there are always gaps in a Ph.D. project, this research did indicate areas I would like to develop further in the future. The extended fieldwork provided me with the opportunity to interact with, and engage in, discussions with children and adults in their everyday contexts. However, I believe a longitudinal study has the scope to offer more comprehensive insights into

the evolving perspectives of children and adults on everyday violence across the generations.

To illustrate the benefits of using a longitudinal study, I return to the case of Shefali. I still remember 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016 – the day when I said goodbye to Shefali, and many others, as I finished my fieldwork to return to the UK. Shefali told me that she would prepare very well for her upcoming SSC exam. Shefali's father noted down my UK mobile phone number and he told me that he really appreciated his daughters' bonding with me over the months. Just a few weeks after my return to the UK, I got an email from the NGO social worker in Bangladesh to say that Shefali's father passed away after being electrocuted. A year later, when I visited Bangladesh, I planned to go to the camp for an informal catch up with some of the participants. I dropped by Shiuly and Shefali's home and met their mother. It was not a surprise that Shefali had to drop out of school and that her exams were no longer the family's priority. This major accident changed the whole equilibrium of the family. Their mother expressed anxiety and even despair about maintaining the family and spoke of her anxiety about her daughters' marriages. My own study did not have the scope to explore further how Shiuly and Shefali, for instance, were responding to this new dynamic but a follow up would be extremely important to understand the role of everyday violence in their lives over the course of their lifetimes. I believe that in the context of structural inequalities and poverty, any uncertainties, and challenges in everyday lives can have enormous consequences in the lives of the children. Thus, any longitudinal study in such contexts has the possibility to provide more nuanced insights into the ways the concepts of everyday violence evolve over time, and how children respond to that violence within the social-structural constraints and changes.

I embraced a relational approach in order to understand children's lives and in my study the participants were mostly children (below 18) and adults (predominantly parents). What is missing is the views of young people aged over 18. While a very few young women actively took part in the research, I did not interview young men. In retrospect, a youth cohort of participants who are working, looking for work, or staying at home would have provided another dimension, especially in exploring gendered inequalities, relationships of power and aspirations and opportunities for children and young people.

Furthermore, I believe that it would be insightful to conduct a similar study in some other contexts, for example, the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh. In 2017, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh, and have been offered temporary shelters in a few camps in areas such as Cox's Bazaar. The Government of Bangladesh, along with national and international bodies, is responding to the emergency context but ethnographic studies on everyday violence of children in a Rohingya Camp context could offer fresh insights to the government, policy makers and practitioners as they develop policies and implement programmes in the camps.

## 7.5 Last word

As I discussed in the Preface of this thesis, Shiuly, one of my key informants, once told me that 'violence is threaded through in our lives'. Throughout the thesis, I used this metaphor of thread to show the interconnectedness and embeddedness of everyday violence that children and adults living in the camp experience. The narratives and images that I presented have brought out these interlacing threads. I agree with Bourgois (2001, p. 30) that the intention of any detailed ethnographic accounts of everyday violence is not to provoke readers or to pathologise children's everyday experiences. Instead, this research has shed light on children's intimate yet complex relationships with everyday violence which enable them to construct, negotiate, and exercise agency in the dynamic socio-cultural context of their everyday lives. Even though violence is part of children's everyday lives, violence is not all they have and not all they are. The accounts of several participants of this research expressed stories of struggles, survivals, and extraordinary strengths even in exceptionally difficult circumstances. I wrap up this thesis with an extract that I wrote in my field diary on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016. This excerpt, I believe, provides a glimpse of how a group of young children find meaning in their lives, and share the joy with each other, even when there is no easy mantra to get away from the loops of everyday violence that is threaded through children's everyday lives.



*Figure 7.1 Children celebrating Tiya's birthday at the NGO drop-in-centre*

In the morning 6-year-old Tiya came to the drop-in-centre wearing a beautiful dress and a balloon in her hand. Her friend Moyna told me, 'Apa, today is Tiya's birthday. We are going to have a birthday party today'. I did not have any clue about the party – when and where it is going to happen or who is going to attend. Tiya told me that they are having the party in this drop-in-centre. A few of her friends would join. Around 8-10 children of her age gathered in a while. The children were running around with joy. This is probably just what is expected to do to set the mood for any party. Tiya went outside, only to return a minute later with a slice of cake in her hand. 'My dad gave me 10 taka (a penny) to have the birthday cake with my friends'. The excitements that I saw in the eyes of all the children were amazing. The excitement to have the 'cake' with the birthday girl. The enthusiasm to cut the 'cake' with friends. A very special moment indeed – a moment that does not come in the life of all the children in the room. We all sang the birthday song. Tiya cut the 'cake' with her friends. They all had a bite of the cake. I was the only adult in the room. I moved to one corner, pretending to be busy with my notebook so that Tiya doesn't feel obliged to share the cake with me. To my surprise, she came to me with the tiniest piece from the slice of the cake, which she already shared with ten other children – a slice and a smile that I will always remember. (Extracts from field diary, 14 November 2016)

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

### Memo on ethics review



The Open University

From Dr Louise Westmarland  
Chair, The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee

Email Louise.westmarland@open.ac.uk  
Extension 52462

To Jiniya Afroze FELS/CREET

Subject Risks and resilience of children in Bangladesh

HREC Ref HREC/2016/2210  
AMS ref  
Submitted 17/02/2016  
Date 01/04/2016

### Memorandum

This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted for ethics review, has been given a **favourable opinion** by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee. Please note that the OU research ethics review procedures are fully compliant with the majority of grant awarding bodies and their Frameworks for Research Ethics.

Please make sure that any question(s) relating to your application and approval are sent to [Research-REC-Review@open.ac.uk](mailto:Research-REC-Review@open.ac.uk) quoting the HREC reference number above. We will endeavour to respond as quickly as possible so that your research is not delayed in any way.

At the conclusion of your project, by the date that you stated in your application, the Committee would like to receive a summary report on the progress of this project, any ethical issues that have arisen and how they have been dealt with.

Kind regards,

Dr Louise Westmarland

Chair, HREC

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (number RC 000391), an exempt charity in England & Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (number SC 038302)

HREC\_2016-2210-Afroze-favourable-opinion.doc



## Consent Form and Information Sheet: Children

### Research Project: Children's lives and experiences in a camp in Bangladesh

My name is Jiniya Afroze. I am doing research about experiences of children.

I want to talk to you about your everyday experiences. What makes you happy or sad? When do you feel safe or risky?

I want to know from you about your strengths. What support you have in the community.



Is it OK with you that:

What you will share will not include your name or identity,

Our conversation will be audio-recorded,

Only I will use the recording and will keep the file in a safe place at Open University, UK for five years and then decide about destroying them,

If you want you can drop out yourself from the research anytime until 30 September 2016,

I might need to talk to someone responsible if I have worry about the safety of yourself or any other children.

YES	NO
YES	NO
YES	NO
YES	NO
YES	NO

Do you think that you are happy with the information above?

Would you like to help me with this research?

Yes or No



If you are happy to participate then please write your name and signature:

Name:

Signature:

Date:



Thank you

Jiniya Afroze, PhD Student

Faculty of Education and Language Studies, Stuart Hall, The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA. Email: [jiniya.afroze@open.ac.uk](mailto:jiniya.afroze@open.ac.uk). Mobile: 075XXXXXX

## Consent form and Information sheet: Parental consent for children



### Research project: Children's lives and experiences in a camp in Bangladesh

My name is Jiniya Afroze. I study at The Open University, UK. I would like to talk to your child about his/her everyday experiences. I would like to know his/her experience about home, school, or work. What makes them happy or sad? What are their strengths? What supports they have in the community? These will help me to understand the child protection situation of the children in your community. The interview/group discussion should take around an hour. I will take the interview at a place which is convenient for you and your children. I will also observe children in their day-to-day lives. I will use the data to write my research, publications, and presentations. I will be happy to share my research findings with you if you want.

All responses will be kept confidential. This means that when I will write about what your children will say, I will not disclose their names or identity and this will ensure that no one will be able to recognise or identify them as respondent.

I will be recording the session because I don't want to miss any of the comments.

If you or your children decide later that you want to withdraw from the research, you can do so by 30 September 2016.

I will keep all the information in a secured locker at The Open University for the next five years and then will review the decision about storing.

Please circle around your answer

Do you think that you have enough information to make a decision about your children's participation?	Yes	No
Are you willing to give consent for your children to participate in this interview/ group discussion?	Yes	No
Are you willing to give consent for your children to be observed in everyday lives?	Yes	No

If you are happy to give consent for your child/children, then please fill up the box below:

Name Signature Date	
---------------------------	--

Thank you,

Jiniya Afroze

Ph.D. Student

*Faculty of Education and Language Studies, Stuart Hall, The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA. Email: [jiniya.afroze@open.ac.uk](mailto:jiniya.afroze@open.ac.uk). Mobile: 075XXXXXX*

## Consent form: Adults



### Research project: Children's lives and experiences in a camp in Bangladesh

My name is Jiniya Afroze. I study at The Open University, UK. I would like to talk to you about the everyday experiences of your children/ children in the community. I would like to know about your understanding of children and childhood, vulnerabilities, and risks of the children in the community and resilience of the children. I want to learn from you about the protective mechanism that exists in the community to ensure the wellbeing of the children. I will also like to learn from you about the ways that can improve the overall child protection system in the community. This will help me to understand the child protection situation of the children in your community. The interview should take around an hour. I will take the interview at a location which is convenient for you. I will use the data to write my research, publications, and presentations. I will be happy to share my research findings with you if you want.

All responses will be kept confidential. This means that when I will write about what you will say, I will not disclose any names or identity and this will make sure that no one will be able to recognise or identify you as respondent.

I will be recording the session because I don't want to miss any of the comments.

If you decide later that you want to withdraw from the research, you can do so by 30 September 2016.

I will keep all the information in a secured locker at The Open University for the next five years and then will review the decision about storing.

Please circle around your answer

Do you think that you have enough information to make a decision about your participation in this research?	Yes	No
Are you willing to give consent for your participation in this research?	Yes	No
Are you willing to give consent to observe you at everyday setting?	Yes	No

If you are happy to give consent, then please fill up the box below:

Name	
Signature	
Date	

Thank you,

Jiniya Afroze

Ph.D. Student

*Faculty of Education and Language Studies, Stuart Hall, The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA. Email: [jiniya.afroze@open.ac.uk](mailto:jiniya.afroze@open.ac.uk). Mobile: 075XXXXXX*

**Introduction:**

Thank you for your time to join this discussion today. I am very happy to meet you. My name is Jiniya Afroze. I study at The Open University, UK. I am working with you and many other children in your community for my research to learn about your everyday experience. About your daily life, your home, family etc. What makes you happy or sad? What do you do when you do not feel safe, where do you go for support? What is your strength? Before we start our discussion, I want to tell you something very important. I want to ask your permission to talk to you, to ask you questions, and record your answers. I will be recording the session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. All responses will be kept confidential. This means that when I will write about what you will say, I will not disclose your name or identity and this will make sure that no one will be able to recognise or identify you as respondent. Remember, you don't have to talk about anything you don't want to and you may end the interview at any time. Also, if you think later that you want to withdraw yourself from this research, you can also do so. You can let me know anytime between now and 30 September 2016 and I will drop all your data. Are there any questions about what I have just explained? Are you willing to take part in this interview?

**Introductory discussion about family and home**

- Where do they live and with whom
- How do they enjoy their family time
- With whom do they enjoy their time more and/or less? Why?

**Daily routine and everyday lives**

- What do they do during the day? Play, learn, and work?
- Discuss their education, schooling, after school care
- If school drop-out then discuss the reason
- If they work then discuss what kind of work they do. Why? Where do you work? With whom?

**Children, childhood, and adulthood**

- Who do they think are children
- Discuss the rights and responsibilities of the children

**Use the hand puppets to start the discussion about different emotions**

- What do they think each puppet is feeling? And why?
- Discuss if they have experienced these feelings, when and why?
- When and where do they feel safe, happy? What makes them feel happy?
- When and where do they feel not very safe, not happy?
- What do they do if they do not feel safe?

**Discuss their understanding of child protection reporting mechanism**

- Where do they go when they need something to tell or share? Whom do they trust more?
- Discuss child protection networks and helpers – I will use a set of images to elicit discussions on the community-based child protection mechanism around them
- Who they think are the positive helpers in their family/community?
- What do you think the person in the image does? What is your experience of getting service from people around the community?

The interview will end with Protective behaviour message to make the children feel safe and protected:

Nothing is so awful that we cannot talk about it with someone

We have all the right to feel safe all the time

**Concluding the interview:**

Thank the participant for giving time and sharing information.

## Appendix D Participants' profile

File name	Participants	Gender	Age	Education	Work	Comments	Date	Length of interview
Individual interviews								
INV-001-F-Nishi	Nishi	F	16	Student - Grade 9	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi	Rozina's daughter	24-Aug	01:13:25
INV-002-F-Tonima	Tonima	F	13	Student - Grade 8	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi	Sohani's daughter	02-Aug	00:36:01
INV-003-F-Sohani	Sohani Begum	F	28	No formal education	House maid	Tonima's Mum	26-Oct	01:15:54
INV-001-M-Adi	Adi	M	14	Student - Grade 9			31-Jul	00:52:00
INV-005-M-Milon	Milon	M	16	Student - Grade 8	Volunteer at a NGO		25-Apr	01:20:19
								00:59:37
INV-006-F-Nazma	Nazma	F	32	No formal education	Karchupi business	Rahul's mum	17-Aug	00:49:46
INV-007-F-Sajeda	Sajeda	F	11	Dropped out at Grade 3	Domestic work/ Caregiver of siblings	School drop out Daughter of Momena	01-Aug	00:53:29
INV-008-F-Shefali	Shefali	F	17	Student - Grade 10	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi	Sister of Jui and Shiuly	08-Aug	01:15:51
INV-009-F-Rodela	Rodela	F	17	Student - Grade 10	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi	Daughter of Sabita	21-Aug	00:55:17
INV-010-F-Sultana	Sultana	F	16	Student - Grade 10	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi		24-Apr	00:39:44
INV-011-F-Bokul	Bokul	F	18	Student - Grade 10	Worked as BTS volunteer		24-Apr	00:43:00
INV-012-F-Mumena	Momena	F	35	No formal education	Garments worker	Sajeda's mum	03-Aug	00:24:43



INV-013-F-Papri	Papri	F	18	Dropped out at Grade 8	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi	Dropped out at grade 8 Marriage in September	10-Aug	00:34:46
INV-014-F-Farida	Farida	F	35	No formal education	Housewife	Papri's mum	10-Aug	00:17:28
INV-015-M-Binoy	Binoy	M	42	No formal education	Karchupi work	father of Rashida and Nashida	15-Nov	01:00:05
INV-016-F-Urmi	Urmi	F	18	Student - Grade 12	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi	dropout at Grade 12 Daughter of Sabina	28-Jul	00:38:04
INV-017-F-Sabina	Sabina	F	35	No formal education	Housewife	Urmi's Mum	03-Aug	00:43:52
INV-018-F-Shomota	Shomota	F	47	No formal education	Housewife Make paper packs at home	Shopno's Mum	14-Nov	00:37:00
INV-019-F-Parul	Parul	F	40	No formal education	Housewife	Champa's Mum	26-Sep	00:39:26
INV-020-F-Jamuna	Jamuna	F	30	Primary	Housewife/ Karchupi	Meghla's Mum	25-Sep	00:33:28
INV-021-M-Lutful	Lutful	M	50	No formal education	Carpenter	Father of Shefali, Shiuli and Jui		00:42:04
INV-022-F-Parvin	Parvin	F	40	No formal education	House maid	Khadiza's Mum	04-Oct	00:52:48
INV-023-F-Bulbuli	Bulbuli	F	5	Nursery		Rahela's daughter		00:22:00
INV-024-M-Probhat	Probhat	M	40	SSC pass	Member of camp welfare committee	Lives in camp adjacent neighbourhood	05-Oct	01:17:29
INV-025-M-Bikram	Bikram	M	70	SSC pass	President of a Bihari welfare association	Lives in camp adjacent neighbourhood	05-Oct	01:25:54
INV-026-F-Jui	Jui	F	14	Student - Grade 9		Youngest sister of Shefali and Shiuly	27-Jul	00:45:15

INV-027-M-Jibon	Jibon	M	50	BA	Teacher in a local school	Lives in camp adjacent quarter	17-Oct	00:40:15
INV-028-M-Shojib	Shojib	M	14	Student - Grade 8			26-Apr	00:20:00
INV-029-F-Halima	Halima	F	35	No formal education	Housewife		02-Aug	00:21:55
INV-030-F-Rozina	Rozina	F	40	No formal education	Housewife, Karchupi worker	Nishi's mum	07-Nov	00:56:29
INV-031-F-Priya	Priya	F	15	Student - Grade 5	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi		24-Apr	00:37:52
INV-032-M-Johny	Jhony	M	14	Student - Grade 8			26-Apr	00:22:50
INV-033-F-Rahela	Rahela Akhter	F	24	No formal education	Housewife	Bulbuli's mum	28-Jul	00:45:25
INV-034-F-Rashida	Rashida	F	14	Student - Grade 9	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi	Dropped out of school while I was doing my fieldwork in 2016 Daughter of Binoy	28-Aug	00:29:45
INV-035-F-Nashida	Nashida	F	11	Student - Grade 4		Sister of Rashida Daughter of Binoy	07-Aug	00:32:19
INV-036-M-Mahiuddin	Mahiuddin	M	30	No formal education	Security guard	Father of a 4 year old girl	31-Jul	00:27:15
INV-037-M-Rubel	Rubel	M	12	Student - Grade 4			07-Aug	00:27:15
INV-038-M-Masum	Masum	M	13	Dropped out Grade 4	Street vendor/ Paper making		08-Aug	00:33:37
INV-039-M-Sarfaraz	Sarfaraz	M	13	Student - Grade 4	Helper at fish market Child carer		14-Aug	00:24:11
INV-040-F-Shejuti	Shejuti	F	17	Dropped out at Grade 8	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi	Dropped out at grade 8	18-Aug	00:33:41
INV-041-M-Pias	Pias	M	12	Student - Grade 5			18-Aug	00:22:14

INV-042-M-Fazila	Fazila	F	13	Student - Grade 7			21-Aug	00:22:55
INV-043-F-Maisha	Maisha	F	12	Student - Grade 5			22-Aug	00:27:31
INV-044-F-Khairun	Khairun	F	35	No formal education	Housewife		25-Sep	00:32:44
INV-045-F-Rabeya	Rabeya	F	30	No formal education	Housewife	Liza's Mum	25-Sep	00:28:57
INV-046-F-Suraiya	Suraiya Akhter	F	45	No formal education	Housewife	Badhon's Mum	25-Sep	00:36:00
INV-047-M-Zaman	Zaman	M	14	Student Grade 7			27-Sep	00:19:45
<b>Group discussions</b>								
GR-001-F	Sultana	F	16	Student - Grade 10	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi	Mukul's sister	09-Oct	01:58:11
	Shefali	F	17	Student - Grade 10	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi	Jui's sister		
	Nishi	F	16	Student - Grade 9	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi	Rozina's daughter		
	Rashida	F	14	Student - Grade 9	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi	School dropped out in 2016		
	Meghla	F	10	Dropped out Grade 1	Domestic chores	School dropped out in 2015 Jamuna's daughter		
	Shiuly	F	20	Dropped out at Grade six	Karchupi	School drop out		
GR-002-M	Mishuk	M	13	Student - Grade 5	Sales helper at Tea Stall		02-Nov	01:08:44
	Bashu	M	14	Dropped out at Grade 3				
	Shaman	M	14	Student - Grade 7	Motor workshops			
	Mukul	M	14	Student - Grade 8	Helper at Saree shop	Brother of Sultana		
	Naveed	M	14	Student - Grade 5		Brother of Ritu		

	Shimanto	M	13	Student - Grade 5	Works at father's tea shop			
	Farzan	M	14	Dropped out at Grade 3	Helper at Saree shop	School drop out		
GR-003-F	Meghla	F	10	Dropped out at Grade 1	Domestic chores	The group met in two settings	08-Sep	02:46:00
	Champa	F	12	Student - Grade 2	Domestic chores			
	Pia	F	10	Student - Grade 2				
	Rima	F	11	Student - Grade 2	Karchupi work			
	Badhon	F	13	Student - Grade 7	Karchupi business			
	Shanta	F	12	Grade 5	Domestic chores		10-Sep	00:52:01
	Jhunu	F	14	Grade 8	Domestic chores			
	Shapna	F	14	Grade 8				
	Maloti	F	14	Grade 5	Karchupi work			
	Jessy	F	11	Grade 9				
	Daisy	F	16	Grade 9				
	Taslima	F	14	Dropped out in Grade 4				
	Jessy	F	11	Grade 5	Domestic chores			
	Daisy	F	16	Grade 9				
	Taslima	F	14	Dropped out in Grade 4				
	Pia	F	10	Grade 2				
	Champa	F	12	Grade 2	Domestic chores			
	Meghla	F	10	Grade 1	Domestic chores			
	Khairun	F	14	Dropped out Grade 6	Domestic chores Karchupi work			
	Shanta	F	12	Dropped out Grade 5	Domestic chores Karchupi work			
	Jhunu	F	14	Dropped out Grade 8	Domestic chores Karchupi work			
						14 children met as a large group - which was split into small groups, all named under GR 003	09-Sep	00:48:52

	Shapna	F	14	Student Grade 8				
	Shafia	F	14	Student Grade 8	Domestic chores			
	Maloti	F	14	Dropped out at Grade 5	Karchupi work			
	Badhon	F	13	Student Grade 7	Karchupi work			
	Rima	F	12	Student Grade 3	Karchupi work			
GR-004-F	Nodi	F	14	Student Grade 8		Ratri's sister	07-Aug	00:47:42
	Ratri	F	16	Dropped out at Grade 5	Domestic chores Karchupi work	Nodi's sister School drop out		
	Pushpo	F	14	Student Grade 6				
	Nahar	F	14	Student Grade 6				
	Faizun	F	13	Student Grade 5	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi	dropped out		
GR-005-M	Mahiudin	M	30		Security guard	Father of a 4 year old girl	10-Nov	00:49:47
	Khabir	M	55		small business	4 children - two daughters are married, and a son and a daughter are living with them		
	Saidul	M	50		Barbar	2 children - student of class 9 and 7		
	Tofa	M	40		Labourer	3 daughters		
	Matin	M	45		Benarasi weaver	two daughters, 17 and 13 years, and a son 8 years		

	Tafsil	M	45		Saree shop	three daughters, one married and the other two are at class 4 and 1, and the son is at class 3		
	Amin	M	28		Business			
	Jashim	M	35		Weaving	two daughters, 7 years and 8 months		
	Faruk	M	40		Karchupi	three daughters and two sons		
GR-006-M	Harun	M	50		Chef	Three sons and a daughter	08-Nov	01:02:53
	Solaiman	M	45		Weaving	four sons		
	Amjad	M	40		Weaving	two daughters and a son		
	Ramjan	M	45		Chef	One son and a daughter		
GR-007-M	Sourav	M	12	Dropped out at Grade 4	Works in shoe factory		26-Apr	00:55:47
	Tomal	M	15	Dropped out at Grade 3	Bus helper			
	Neel	M	12	Grade 5				
	Arko	M	14	Grade 7				
	Shopno	M	11	Grade 3	Apprentice at automobile repair shop			
GR-008-M	Shurjo	M	7	Grade 3	Box making factory		16-Oct	00:48:41
	Mintu	M	11	Grade 4	Tea shop			
	Bablu	M	10	Grade 2				
	Pappu	M	10	Grade 2				

GR-009-M	Naveed	M	14	Grade 5			19-Aug	00:52:51
	Mosharaf	M	11	Grade 6	Sales helper at saree shop			
	Shimanto	M	13	Grade 5	Works at father's tea shop			
	Rahul	M	13	Grade 7				
	Mishuk	M	13	Grade 5	Sales helper at Tea Stall			
	Murad	M	14		Sales helper at saree shop			
GR-010-F	Murshida	F	30		Karchupi work and domestic work		16-Nov	00:50:51
	Smriti	F	31		Karchupi work and domestic work			
	Koli	F	30		Karchupi work and domestic work			
	Poly	F	19		Karchupi work and domestic work			
	Chapa	F	30		Karchupi work and domestic work			
	Mohua	F	30		Karchupi work and domestic work			
GR-011-F	Shamsi	F	14	Student Grade 8	Karchupi work	School dropped out in 2016	05-Sep	00:54:16
	Nupur	F	15	Student Grade 8	Domestic chores Karhcupi work			
	Ramiza	F	10	Student Grade 4				
	Jui	F	14	Student Grade 9				
	Pria	F	15	Student Grade 5	Karchupi work			

Group interviews								
JNT-001- F-Naila & Shamsun	Naila	F	15		Housewife	Married at 13 and a mum at 14	11-Aug	01:12:17
	Mrs. Shamsun	F	29		Housewife	Naila's mum		
JNT-002- M-Arun & Taposh	Arun	M	36		Business man		10-Nov	01:23:54
	Taposh	M	28		Service			
JNT-003- F-Kabori, Diba, Ratri & Nodi	Mrs. Kabori	F	48		Homemaker	Mother of Diba Ratri and Nodi	20-Oct	01:01:43
	Diba	F	22	dropped out at Grade 3	Domestic chores Karchupi Paper pack making at home	Siblings		
	Ratri	F	16	dropped out at Grade 5	Domestic work/ Hand embroidery			
	Nodi	F	14	Grade 8				
JNT-004- Sabita & Jewel	Mrs. Sabita	F	50		Housewife	Rodela's mum	26-Oct	01:01:34
	Jewel	M	20	dropped out at grade 10	looking for a job	Rodela's brother		
JNT-005- F-Bilkis & Ria	Mrs. Bilkis	F	35		Housewife	Pia's Mum	19-Sep	00:47:43
	Ria	F	17	Grade 11		Pia's sister		
JNT-006- Diti, Dulal & Marufa	Diti	F	15	dropped out at Grade 4		School dropout Married at 14 years	09-Aug	00:52:08
	Dulal	M	22			Diti's brother		
	Marufa	F	46		Housewife	Diti's mum		
JNT-007- F-Purnima & Mona	Purnima	F	16	Student at Grade 9	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi		22-Aug	00:30:38
	Mona	F	15	Student Grade 9	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi			
	Shurjo	M	7	Grade 3	Box making factory		04-Sep	00:34:31



JNT-008-M-Shurjo & Mintoo	Mintu	M	12	Grade 4	Tea shop			
JNT-009-F-Daisy & Taslima	Daisy	F	16	Grade 9			18-Sep	00:32:54
	Taslima	F	14	dropped out Grade 3				
JNT-010-F-Hamida & Rini	Mrs. Hamida	F	45		Housewife	Rima's Mum	26-Sep	00:43:59
	Rini	F	25		Karchupi worker	Eldest sister of Rima and Taslima		
JNT-011-Nargis, Hashem & Ritu	Nargis	F	27		Hand embroidery/ Karchupi	Mother of Ritu and Reaz	01-Aug	00:49:51
	Hashem	M	35		Business	Father of Ritu and Reaz		
	Ritu	F	12	Grade 3		Sister of Reaz		
JNT-012-F-Habiba & Sabiha	Habiba	F	13	Grade 5	Hand embroidery/ Karchupi		10-Aug	00:35:29
	Mrs. Sabiha	F	30		Hand embroidery/ Karchupi			
JNT-013-F-Fabia & Mabia	Fabia	F	22	Elementar y	karchupi work		20-Nov	00:49:41
	Mabia	F	20	Grade 7	karchupi work			
Participant observation – audio recorded notes								
FN-001	Meeting at Council or's office							00:45:00
FN-002	Particip ant observa tion							01:00:04
FN-003	Particip ant observa tion							01:04:04
FN-004	Particip ant observa tion							00:56:44
FN-005	Particip ant observa tion							00:12:46
FN-006	Particip ant							00:29:17

	observa tion							
FN-007	Particip ant observa tion							00:53:34
FN-008	Particip ant observa tion							00:25:15
FN-009	Particip ant observa tion							00:44:19
FN-010	Particip ant observa tion							00:32:13
FN-011	Particip ant observa tion							00:28:28
FN-012	Tia	F	5			Not school going age		00:38:28
	Moyna	F	6			Not school going age		
FN-013	Rehana	F	35	Class 8	Karchupi work	Mum of Johny		00:10:00
FN-014	Mrs. Monalis a	F	35		ECD Facilitator			00:36:12

Appendix E      **Hand puppets**



## Appendix F      **Group discussion guide**

Participants: Six to eight participants with attention to diversity (for example, age, gender, religion, education, different economic status, different social status, ability etc.)

Separate groups of girls and boys as below:

Group 1: Girls – 7 to 12 years old

Group 2: Girls – 13 to 18 years old

Group 3: Boys – 7 to 12 years old

Group 4: Boys – 13 to 18 years old

Time: 1.5 hours to 2 hours

### **Introduction:**

Thank you, everyone, for your time to join this discussion today. I am very happy to see all of you. My name is Jiniya Afroze. I study at The Open University, UK. I am working with you in this community for my research to learn about your everyday experiences about protection and wellbeing, risks and resilience, what do you do when you do not feel safe, where do you go for support. This is the goal of our research. Before we start our discussion, I want to tell you something very important. I want to request your permission to talk to you, to ask you questions, and record your answers. If there is anyone here who would prefer not to take part in this discussion, you are free to say that you would not like to participate. In addition, you are free to leave. I respect confidentiality and believe that you have the right for your matters to be private. I can assure, to the best of my ability, what we will discuss today will not be repeated by me to others in a way that participants can be identifiable. I will not disclose what an individual will say in this discussion and I will anonymise the individuals and other details during the dissemination of the study findings to protect the identity of the participants. However, I cannot guarantee if anyone in this room discusses or share with others about our discussion today. Considering the limitation of the confidentiality, you have the right to decide as much or as little information, you want to share in our discussion today. Are there any questions that you want to ask me before we start? Are you willingly to participate in this discussion?

### **Warm-up and ice breaking**

Presentation of the children: With a game, the participants will introduce themselves. This game is played with a ball of wool.

The first person holds the ball of the wool in their hand introduces them and talks about one positive thing about them.

They then throw the ball of wool to any other person in the circle, while holding on to the beginning of the ball of wool.

The second person, in turn, holds the remaining of the ball of wool and a similar self-introduction and throws the ball while holding on to part of the ball of wool.

A spider web is formed with the wool once everyone has introduced himself or herself. The web is unravelled by backtracking.

The person who throws the ball of wool back must call out the name of the person to whom the ball of wool is thrown back.

This will help to introduce them in a fun-filled way. I will then will reflect on all the positive things that the children said about themselves and will celebrate the strengths of the group as a whole!

**Activity 1:** I will show a number of photos to the children to listen to their views about what they see in the photo. They can relate their personal experience associated with the photos, or they can comment in general from their observation on the photos. This will allow the children to discuss in groups about their education, work, play, and child marriage and this may lead them to discuss the risks that they experience in their everyday lives.

**Activity 2:** Listing and ranking: I will ask the children to make a list of the things that make them happy. After jotting down the points in a white flip sheet, I will ask them to list a few things that make them sad or unhappy. This will help to generate discussions about child protection risks in a more sensitive and child-friendly way. This will lead to a discussion around their experiences at home, at school and the community.

- This can lead to discussions on the community support network:
- What would the child do if they do not feel safe?
- Where would they go for support?
- What would be the role of the community people?

**Activity 3:** Personal strength: I will then ask each child to talk to his/her peer and identify the three strengths of the peer. Then in a large group, each child will talk about the strengths of their peer. This will help to summarise the strengths that the children have which help them to overcome or cope up even when they do not feel safe or unhappy. This discussion will help to identify the resilience of the children.

### **Concluding the discussion**

Thanks to the participants for their participation in the discussion. Ask them if they have any questions to ask.

Appendix G      **Images used in group discussions**



Appendix H      **Vignettes used in group discussions**

1. Maloti, a 12-year-old girl, is not attending school. She looks after her younger siblings and takes care of home when her parents go out for work.
2. 13-year-old Ratan works at his uncle's motor workshop in the camp. His parents and his uncle are not happy with him as from the last few weeks he is not going to work regularly.
3. Shampa, 16, recently dropped out of school as her parents have arranged for her marriage next month.
4. Sania 14, was playing games at her father's phone. She is an expert in using smart phones. She asked her parents to buy her a phone otherwise she said that she won't go to school anymore.

## Glossary

<i>Abbu</i>	Dad
<i>Agorbati</i>	Firecrackers
<i>Alada/ Besh-kom</i>	Inequalities
<i>Amader</i>	Our
<i>Ammu</i>	Mum
<i>Andaaz</i>	Speculation
<i>Apa</i>	A kinship term to address someone as an older sister
<i>Baba</i>	Dad
<i>Bachcha</i>	Kid
<i>Baire</i>	Outside
<i>Baleg</i>	Matured/ grown up
<i>Basti</i>	Slum
<i>Beyadob</i>	Disobedient
<i>Beyadobi</i>	Disobedience
<i>Bhalo</i>	Good
<i>Bhalo bhabe</i>	With decency
<i>Bhalo kaaj</i>	Decent work
<i>Bhul</i>	Wrong
<i>Bibek</i>	Conscience
<i>Bipod</i>	Danger
<i>Bodnaam</i>	Disgrace
<i>Boishomyo</i>	Discrimination
<i>Bojha</i>	Burden
<i>Boka</i>	Stupid, dull
<i>Borbad</i>	Wasted
<i>Borborota</i>	Brutality
<i>Boro</i>	Big
<i>Boro manush</i>	Someone big/ reputable
<i>Boro bela</i>	Older age
<i>Bou</i>	Wife
<i>Chaap</i>	Stress
<i>Chacha</i>	Paternal uncle
<i>Chatpati</i>	Savoury snacks
<i>Chele</i>	Boy (also son)
<i>Cheler Bou</i>	Daughter-in-law
<i>Chillachilli</i>	Chaos and uproar
<i>Chorka</i>	Spinning thread
<i>Chhoto</i>	Small/ young
<i>Chhoto bela</i>	Young age/ childhood
<i>Chhuta</i>	Run
<i>Daal</i>	Lentils
<i>Dangor</i>	Grown-up
<i>Dapot</i>	Power
<i>Demag</i>	Vanity
<i>Desh</i>	Village
<i>Dinkaal</i>	Time and age
<i>Dushmon</i>	Enemy
<i>Gaala-gaali</i>	Bad words/ swearing
<i>Goli</i>	Lanes
<i>Ganja</i>	Marijuana
<i>Gantha</i>	Threaded
<i>Ghor</i>	home



<i>Ghorer kaaj</i>	Domestic chores
<i>Hujur</i>	Teacher at a Madrasa
<i>Ichcha</i>	Desire/ wish/ aspiration
<i>Ichcha Shokti</i>	Determination
<i>Ijjat/ izzat</i>	Honour/ respectability
<i>Jhogra-jhati</i>	Quarrels
<i>Jhuki</i>	Risks
<i>Jibon</i>	Life
<i>Jiboner shikkha</i>	Education of life
<i>Jogyota</i>	Capability/ ability
<i>Joghonyo</i>	filthy
<i>Julum</i>	Oppression/ violence
<i>Kaj</i>	Work
<i>Karkhana</i>	Small factory or informal workshop
<i>Kharap</i>	Bad
<i>Khomota</i>	Power
<i>Khub Kharap</i>	Very bad
<i>Kishor</i>	Adolescent boy
<i>Kishori</i>	Adolescent girl
<i>Kismaat</i>	Luck
<i>Labh</i>	Benefits
<i>Lalsha</i>	Lust
<i>Logni</i>	Investments
<i>Ma</i>	Mum
<i>Maan-shomman</i>	Respectability, dignity
<i>Maara-maari</i>	Hitting/fighting
<i>Maar-dhor</i>	Hitting/smacking
<i>Madrasa</i>	Islamic educational institute
<i>Magna</i>	For free
<i>Mahal</i>	Neighbourhood
<i>Mama</i>	Maternal uncle
<i>Mana</i>	Inhibition
<i>Manush</i>	Human being (often used to mean good human being)
<i>Mawora</i>	Descendants of Maurya Empire
<i>Mastaan</i>	Mafia
<i>Meye</i>	Girl (also daughter)
<i>Milemishe</i>	Harmoniously
<i>Mohajon</i>	Supervisor at a small factory
<i>Morichika</i>	Mirage
<i>Murkho</i>	Illiterate
<i>Namaz</i>	Prayers
<i>Nani</i>	Grand-ma
<i>Netritwo</i>	Leadership
<i>Nirdoyoya</i>	Cruelty
<i>Niribili</i>	Isolated
<i>Nirjaton</i>	Abuse
<i>Nitol</i>	Clean
<i>Noshto</i>	Rotten
<i>Odhikar</i>	Rights
<i>Omanush</i>	Rascal, scoundrel
<i>Onek Bhalo</i>	Very good
<i>Oshomman</i>	Disrespect
<i>Otishtho</i>	Bothered, tired
<i>Pagol</i>	Mad/crazy
<i>Palli</i>	Village

<i>Pichhone</i>	After
<i>Poribar</i>	Family
<i>Poribesh</i>	Environment/ ambience
<i>Poth</i>	Path
<i>Rajakar</i>	Collaborators
<i>Samosa</i>	A savoury snack
<i>Shabolombi</i>	Self-dependant
<i>Shashuri</i>	Mother-in-law
<i>Shikkha</i>	Education
<i>Shikkhito</i>	Educated
<i>Shingara</i>	A savoury snack
<i>Shishu</i>	Child/ children
<i>Shlilotahani</i>	Dishonour/ sexual abuse
<i>Shobji</i>	Mixed vegetable curry
<i>Shoishob</i>	Childhood
<i>Shokti</i>	Strength
<i>Shomman</i>	Respect/ Dignity
<i>Shompod</i>	Property
<i>Shongshar</i>	Family
<i>Shothik</i>	Appropriate
<i>Showshur Bari</i>	Father-in-law's house
<i>Shundor</i>	Beautiful
<i>Shwamir Bair</i>	Husband's house
<i>Taat</i>	Weaving
<i>Thonga</i>	Small paper packets
<i>Unnoyon</i>	Development
<i>Ure-ghure</i>	Loitering around
<i>Ustad</i>	Supervisor

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